Annual
Subscription
in North America
$45

BELARUSIAN REVIEW

Quarterly Information Bulletin (ISSN 1064-7716)
Published by Belarusan-American Association, Inc.
a fraternal nonprofit association
Managing Editor: P.O. Box 10353, Torrance, CA 90505 USA
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http://www.belreview.cz/

Vol. 13, No. 3 Fall 2001



Boundaries shown on this map are those of the Republic of Belarus, and do not include the entire Belarusian ethnic territory parts of which extend into neighboring states.

EDITOR'S DESK

Presidential Elections in Belarus: Missed Opportunity

Belarus held its presidential election on September 9. The Lukashenka-appointed Central Electoral Commission announced that the incumbent won the election with 75 percent of the vote; Uladzimir Hancharyk, the opposition's candidate, had 15 percent. With the exception of Russia, foreign leaders, diplomats and human rights groups described the election as "fundamentally flawed" and "undemocratic." The U.S. Department of State said the result "cannot be recognized" and the White House accused Lukashenka of stealing the election and the opportunity of the Belarusian people "to return to a path towards democracy and free market economy."

We wrote many times in this page that Lukashenka, by hook and crook, would try to stay in power. He has proved our point beautifully. Under pressure from the West to run a transparent, free, and fair election, he promised to do just that. He agreed to modify the electoral law and have foreign monitors observe the elections. At the same time, he ignored the law and installed an electoral system that would secure his victory. He rigged the election long before the actual vote by blocking his opponents from the media, intimidating voters, delaying or hindering participation of international and domestic observers, harassing opposition members and independent journalists and confiscating electoral materials and newspapers. In the closing days of the campaign, he threatened to expel OSCE Mission head Ambassador Hans-Georg Wieck and U.S. Ambassador Mike Kozak.

Specifically, he denied the entry of the OSCE monitoring team in time for it to be able to verify the system and observe the candidate registration process and election campaign. Only when the system was firmly in place, did he let the observers to come in to witness only the final phase of the election. In addition, non-governmental local observers were either disempowered or kept away from voting places. As a result, both the foreign and local observers were unable to monitor the most critical phase of the election — the "early voting." It started five days before the election day and accounted for over 20 percent of the total vote. It was wide open to ballot-stuffing and easy manipulation by commissioners —all but a few appointed by the government. Here is a case where the saying "it's not important who votes, it's important who counts the votes" makes sense.

But, in our opinion, it was the Russian factor that determined who would be the next president of Belarus. It is no great secret that Lukashenka has powerful friends in Russia. Except for Boris Nemtsov, who expressed support of Hancharyk, the political chiefs of all stripes and Russia's economic wheelers and dealers, who visited Belarus before the vote, all endorsed Lukashenka. Following the ballot, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev welcomed the election result. Russian President Vladimir Putin was the first to call the Belarusian leader to warmly congratulate him on his "convincing victory." Not to be outdone, Boris Yeltsin sent his best wishes on Lukashenka's inauguration day.

Why all the attention? Russia is determined to keep Belarus under its control so it could use it as a buffer to limit NATO's eastward expansion and a gateway

to the West. And Lukashenka is willing to pay the price for Russia's support during the election and for the recognition of its result. He knows that without Russia's political and economic support he would be out of a job in no time and perhaps facing the judges in The Hague. And so, while the West refuses to deal with Lukashenka for his Soviet-style rule of the country and poor record on human rights, Russia, for its own selfish reasons, is determined to keep him in power — at least until Belarus is fully absorbed into the Russian Federation.

On a positive note, OSCE Ambassador to Belarus Hans-Georg Wieck said the poll had at least united the diverse opposition. "The most important result of this election is the development of democratically and politically competent institutions in civil society," he said. Vintsuk Viachorka, chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front, said that "Finally there should no more illusions . . . that Russia will help the Belarusians remove the dictatorship." Viachorka's statement that "Lukashenka's regime lost the election because the civilized world has not recognized it as democratic" is small consolation considering that Lukashenka will rule the country for five more years and maybe even longer.

For a year the democratic opposition in Belarus was talking about following the Yugoslav scenario, which included thousands of Yugoslavs taking to the streets, causing the Yugoslav election commission to revise its report in favor of the opposition. But the Belarusian opposition failed to get thousands of people to the streets. The opposition also was too late to unite and select a single candidate, and too late with a sensible campaign platform. It failed to break through government's barriers to get its message across to voters, especially those in rural areas. To be honest, under the Lukashenka scenario no opposition candidate had a chance to win. Lukashenka's rigged election system was set up to deliver him 75 percent of the vote no matter what. As history teaches us, it is not easy to unseat an entrenched autocrat by peaceful means — it takes a revolution

A few days after the election, Belarus' government appealed to the West to end its policy of isolating Belarus. The European Union responded September 14 by saying that Belarus must improve its human rights record and move towards democracy if it wants better ties with the West. It further said, "The European Union will continue to support the transition to democracy and will hold consultations on the subject with all the political forces of Belarus which are prepared to work in the same direction." A little earlier, the director of the OSCE's human rights branch, Gerard Stoudmann, said, "A policy of isolation has never worked." The five members of the European Parliament who visited Minsk issued a statement decrying the lack of a free and open election campaign. But they also urged the 15-nation EU to avoid isolating Belarus further, noting that "the isolation of the country is not in the best interest of the people of Belarus and is not conducive to strengthening democratic development."

The United States remains one of Lukashenka's harshest critics. Secretary of State Colin Powell recently called Belarus Europe's "lone, remaining outlaw." The U.S. State Department said the election was meaningless. The September 17 White House statement was more specific. It said that "President Bush believes that Belarus and its people can and should be a part of a Europe whole, free, and at peace," and that "Not only did Aleksander Lukashenko, Europe's last dictator, steal the elections from the Belarusian people — for the moment, he also stole their opportunity to return to a path towards democracy and a free market economy." It reiterated that "Elections that are neither free nor fair cannot be internationally recognized." It assured that "The United States will work with our European allies through our foreign assistance programs and through international organizations to promote a more hopeful future based on respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law." In conclusion it said "We extend our friendship and support to the people of Belarus and express our hope they will soon join with the other free nations of an undivided, democratic Europe that is now emerging."

Where do we go from here? The final report of the OSCE monitoring team is expected to be out in mid-October. But Lukashenka has already made clear he would make no "radical changes" to the way he runs the country. He mocked the opposition as "worthless" and urged it "not to incite conflicts." He assailed the West for refusing to recognize his election and didn't hide his distaste toward the United States.

From the statements made by Western politicians it appears that the West is considering reassessment of its relations with Belarus, conceding that the policy of isolation of Belarus has not produced desired results. The one-track policy of stick and no carrot has deprived the West of any leverage in Belarus, leaving the country exposed to the tender mercies of Russia.

The opposition needs to take a deep breath and reevaluate the current situation, reassess its strategy, preserve unity, and continue to work on developing a civic society and democratic institutions. The West seems to be willing to increase its help in this area. Hopefully, the terrorist attack on the United States would not weaken West's resolve to work with the opposition and NGOs to build democracy in Belarus and help the country preserve its independence.

Terrorist Attack on the U.S.

The *Belarusian Review* wishes to extend its condolences to the friends and relatives of the more than 6,000 victims of the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11. Some 60 countries suffered losses in the attack on the World Trade Center, including hundreds of heroic rescuers who gave their lives trying to save others. This was not simply an attack on the World Trade Center or the Pentagon, it was an attack on all of us and an affront to humanity

Happy Birthday!

It is with great pleasure that we at *Belarusian Review* and our friends and supporters, who have been involved positively with and touched by any aspect of the past or present events in Belarus, join in extending our congratulations and best wishes to:

The Reverend Alexander Nadson, Apostolic Visitator to Belarusian Catholics Abroad, Director of the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library in London, and extraordinary servant to the Belarusian people, particularly those suffering the impact of the Chernobyl disaster in Belarus, on his 75th birthday, and,

Dr. Jan Zaprudnik, pre-eminent author, historian, and expert on ancient and contemporary Belarusian history and culture, on his 75th birthday.

The work and dedication of these two outstanding individuals is forever recognized with the deepest and most sincere gratitude.

Acknowledgments

Support in Creating BR. We wish to express our thanks to our friends who helped prepare this issue: Paul Goble and David Marples for contributing articles; Jamestown Foundation and Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty for permission to reprint copyrighted material; Charter'97, BelaPAN, CSCE, OSCE, the White House and the Department of State for using their material; Alex Silwanowicz for helping with source material, Olga Wilson with newspaper clippings; Joe Pecevich for editing; George Stankevich for translation, typesetting and distribution; and Vaclau Bahdanovich for reproducing the issue in Belarus.

Joe Price, Editor

FEATURES

Secretary of State Powell on 10th Anniversary Of Belarus' Independence

Following is the text of Secretary Powell's statement on the 10th anniversary of Belarus' declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. The statement was released by the U.S. Department of State on August 25, 2001.

Belarus' August 25, 1991 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union filled Americans with hope and admiration.

We witnessed Belarus rapidly take its rightful place in Europe through ratification of the START Treaty, accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and removal of all former Soviet nuclear weapons; through its active membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace; and through its policy to help build a Europe of democratic, truly independent countries free of dividing lines.

We were pleased to support the Belarusian people as they worked hard during those first years after 1991 to strengthen their independence, create a democratic political system and rule of law, revive their rich culture, undertake difficult market reforms, and foster an open society. Our support for Belarus and its people as they moved forward was reflected in the highest-level contacts between our two countries, including President Clinton's visit in January 1994.

Material assistance in support of Belarus' transition to democracy was, and has continued to be, generous as well. Since the beginning of 1992 the United States has provided more than $560 million in a broad range of public and private assistance to the Belarusian people, including more than $24 million in the past year.

Thus the commitment of the United States to the Belarusian people and to their desire for independence and democracy has remained vigorous and direct. We would welcome the opportunity to continue growing our bilateral relations in the same way.

Regrettably, since 1996 the Belarusian regime has chosen to abandon the transition to democracy and the rule of law. The regime has harassed civil society. It has constantly violated human rights and other commitments and obligations which Belarus accepted as an OSCE participating state and signatory of the Vienna Convention. Its policies have led to retrogression in economic policy and performance, with attendant pauperization and decline in public health standards. It has tried—in vain—to stir up hostility toward Euro-Atlantic institutions. In short, the regime's policies have prevented the United States and other OSCE participating states from being able to develop bilateral relations fruitfully and normally.

What will it take to put our bilateral relations back on a strong footing?

The answer is simple, and one which we continue to state to the Belarusian authorities, to the citizens of Belarus, and in international fora. The United States is prepared to resume productive bilateral relations; to restart high-level contacts; and to encourage greater two-way political, trade, investment, and military contacts. However, we are prepared to do so only if the Belarusian authorities adhere to the standards Belarus accepted as an OSCE participating state and UN member state. Among others these standards include free, fair and democratic electoral processes; respect for civil society and human rights; and rule of law.

The Belarusian authorities know the specific steps they need to take to meet their OSCE commitments and to have the results of the upcoming presidential election recognized as valid. The OSCE, United States, EU, and most recently the Chairman of the Russian Central Election Commission have spelled out what the authorities need to do to bring their electoral process into conformity with OSCE standards.

The Belarusian authorities' failure to take these steps in a timely, consequential, and serious way will not deter us from continuing to expand our contacts directly with the Belarusian people. But this failure will condemn the current regime to remain the lone outlaw in Europe.

We thus express our hope that the Belarusian authorities will work with the citizenry of Belarus to return their country to the path it began to tread so resolutely on August 25, 1991.

Source: *US Embassy, Minsk, Belarus*
(http://www.usis.minsk.by)

U.S. Position Toward Belarus

Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, visited Minsk August 15, 2001. Following are her answers to questions from BelaPAN, an independent news agency in Belarus, explaining U.S. Position toward Belarus.

Q: This year, the coming presidential elections are going to be the most important political event in Belarus. The United States has repeatedly called on the Belarusian authorities requesting that the elections should be transparent and fair. Now, less than sixty days before the elections, do you think that officials in Minsk have heard your message?

A: We have been very clear in our message, both publicly and in our diplomatic exchanges with Belarusian officials, and I hope that the authorities clearly understand what we have said. We have discussed in detail exactly what practical steps they would need to take within their existing legal framework to achieve compliance with the OSCE commitments regarding elections. What remains to be seen is whether the Belarusian authorities will heed the calls of their OSCE colleagues and many others within the international community that the upcoming presidential election be conducted in a free and fair manner in accordance with the standards that Belarus has committed to in the OSCE framework. Less than one month before the election, we believe that the Belarusian public should be engaged in a debate about the candidates' competing visions for Belarus' future and not witnessing new challenges to the opposition's ability to compete fairly.

Unfortunately, there are a number of troubling signs that the upcoming presidential election will not be free and fair. In recent weeks, non-governmental organizations conducting non-partisan election-related activity have been attacked by police and U.S. government owned equipment has been seized. There is growing pressure on the independent media, and the opposition remains at the government's mercy to gain access to state media on fair terms. The Belarusian opposition is not even marginally represented on the central and territorial electoral commissions. To establish a framework for fair regulation of elections, Belarusian authorities

need to ensure that the opposition enjoys representation from the local level on up through the Central Electoral Commission. Finally, a fair competition will require an independent domestic and international election observation effort. More than a month after the elections were announced, and despite the recommendation of European institutions, Belarus has delayed the invitation to the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to observe these elections even though the authorities acknowledge that they—like every other OSCE member—are expressly obligated to invite ODIHR.

Q: Is there a possibility for the United States to co-operate with Russia with regard to the elections in Belarus? Reportedly, Kremlin has got serious influence on Belarusian leaders. Has the United States taken any steps in this direction?

A: As a member of the OSCE, Russia shares the same interests as the other fifty-four OSCE members (including Belarus and the U.S.) that Belarus meet the standards which it has committed to in the OSCE framework, including compliance with its international commitments to maintain human freedoms and a free, fair, and transparent electoral process. As a neighbor, Russia has a particular interest in the development of a prosperous, stable, and democratic Belarus. I would note the recent agreement reached by Mr. Alexander Veshnyakov, Chairman of the Russian Federation Central Election Commission, Mr. Zoltan Toth, Secretary General of the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO), and Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) under which Russian Federation Central Election Commission Observers will be deployed within the framework of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Belarus.

Q: If Alexander Lukashenko wins the elections, will the United States recognize the results of the voting?

A: The United Slates Government has said on repeated occasions that it is prepared to accept the results of a free and fair presidential election process carried out in accordance with the standards that Belarus has committed to in the OSCE framework. If Alexander Lukashenko or anyone else wins an election that is carried out in accordance with those standards, the United States Government will recognize the results. Unfortunately, the electoral process that we have seen to date is not meeting those standards.

Q: What election result may encourage the United States to change its attitude towards Belarus? Is it possible that Belarus will receive most favored nation treatment, financial assistance, additional American investments, extra humanitarian help (especially regarding Chernobyl aftermath)?

A: The Government of Belarus knows in very specific terms the steps that it needs to achieve recognition of its elections as free, fair, and transparent. It also knows what the United States and other nations are prepared to do to improve relations if Belarus adheres to all of its OSCE commitments. This would include steps to restart high-level contacts and to encourage greater two-way trade, investment, and defense cooperation.

Q: American businessmen have got sad experience of investing in Belarus. In particular, Belarusian authorities breached their agreements with Ford Union and the company had to withdraw its activities from this country. A few weeks ago, Minsk authorities tried to squat (sic) the piece of land that had been allocated to McDonald's restaurant. Is the United States planning any steps to maintain its business presence in Belarus?

A: The United States Government believes that American business will invest in Belarus when Belarus has a favorable business climate. A key part of this is an independent, honest legal system that will enforce contracts, resolve claims and otherwise create a level legal playing field for all business, so that advantage is gained from the ability to produce better products and services at lower cost, and not from corruption or political favoritism. In short, the Belarusian government must provide fair, predictable rules of the game that allow businesses to compete in constructive ways. We are quite sure that American business will return to Belarus when those conditions exist.

Q: Should Belarusian democrats fail at the elections, what the American strategy will be with regards to Belarusian NGOs and independent mass media?

A: Assistance to NGOs and independent media has always been a major component of the U.S. Government's democracy-building programs in Belarus. NGOs and independent media play an indispensable role in the building of a strong civil society, which is vital for democracy to thrive. In the case of NGOs, we see that they are growing stronger and that their relationships with local governments and the business sector continue to improve. Civil society also requires a strong and flourishing independent media. Regardless of the outcome of the September elections, the U.S. Government will continue to work with NGOs and independent media because they form the backbone of a strong civil society.

Q: Lukashenko's victory is likely to increase the number of refugees from Belarus. Is it possible that the United States will make it easier for Belarusian citizens to seek asylum in your country?

A: If free and fair elections are allowed, the Belarusian voters will have the opportunity to choose their future leadership. In fact, if Belarus carries out elections in a free, fair, and transparent manner, we can envision Belarusians wanting to return home to Belarus. But at present, the U.S. has no plans to change the procedures for Belarusians who seek asylum in the U.S.

Q: On 9 July, wives of the missing Belarusian politicians addressed the international community requesting that an independent commission should be created to investigate these cases. What is the US position regarding this issue? Would your country be prepared to take part in the work of such commission?

A: The U.S. Government has encouraged and continues to urge that Belarusian authorities investigate expeditiously, thoroughly, and openly all of the disappearances. But frankly, the credibility of the investigation has been called into question by the recent revelations by the investigators themselves. The families of the disappeared and the people of Belarus have a right to know the truth about what has happened. We have already told the Belarusian government that U.S. officials would agree to participate in an independent review of our consultations with the Belarusian investigators. Again, this is an opportunity that the authorities have let pass. We would be happy to consider providing technical assistance to an independent commission if asked.

Q: According to Lukashenko, the union with Russia is vital for Belarus because of NATO's spread to the east and the US increasing its military presence at Belarusian borders. What is the current US military doctrine regarding Central and Eastern Europe?

A: NATO is no threat to Belarus. Indeed, Belarus and Russia are associated with NATO through the NATO Partnership for Peace (PFP) program.

Q: Don't you fear that the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty may result in the return of nuclear weapons to Belarus?

A: While the ABM Treaty was appropriate during the Cold War, the United States and Russia are no longer adversaries. In the meantime, the United States faces new threats from ballistic missile in the hands of rogue states. The United

States Government would like to find a way to move in co-operation with Russia beyond the ABM Treaty to create a new security architecture appropriate to today's world. That would include limited missile defense and a much-reduced strategic offensive capability. I cannot imagine that under any possible scenario Russia would see it in its own interest to proliferate nuclear weapons. We expect that Belarus will honor the terms of the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that its parliament ratified on February 4, 1993 and to which Belarus acceded to on July 22, 1993.

Q: What is your view of the future of bilateral relations between Belarus and the United States if Belarus goes further in its integration with Russia? In particular, how the US will react if the two countries adopt a joint Constitution or elect a Union Parliament?

A: We view good Russian-Belarusian relations as a natural and positive phenomenon. The process of formal integration however, should be voluntary, democratic, mutually beneficial, and should not erect barriers to wider transatlantic integration. But it is difficult for us to accept the Lukashenko regime decision to pursue union with Russia as long as Lukashenko refuses to allow the Belarusian people a genuine voice in national policy.

Elizabeth Jones, of Bethesda, Maryland, was sworn in as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs on May 31,2001. She served previously as Senior Advisor for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy after having been Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs from 1998 to 2000. She was Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995-98) and served as Executive Assistant to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, 1993-94. In other Washington assignments, she was Deputy Director for Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq (1983-1984), Lebanon Desk Officer (1981-83), and public affairs officer in the Near East and South Asia Bureau (1972-73).

She was born in Germany in 1948, while her parents were assigned there with the U.S. Foreign Service. She attended local high schools in Moscow, USSR, and West Berlin, Germany, while her parents were on diplomatic assignments there. She graduated from Swarthmore College in 1970 with a BA in history and earned a Masters degree in International Relations from Boston University's overseas program in Berlin in 1986. Ambassador Jones speaks Russian, German, and Arabic. She has two children, Todd and Courtney, and is married to Donald A. Ruschman of Chicago, Illinois.

Source: US Embassy, Minsk, Belarus
(http://www.usis.minsk.by/)

U.S. Helsinki Commission Leaders Concerned About Disappearance of Political Leaders In Belarus

Following is the text of the statement by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), made on July 18, 2001, in conjunction with a visit to Washington of four wives of Belarusian opposition leaders whose husbands have either disappeared, been imprisoned, or have died under mysterious circumstances.

"DISAPPEARED" BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS

Mr. President, earlier today, I had the opportunity to meet with four wives of Belarusian opposition leaders who have either disappeared, been imprisoned, or have died under mysterious circumstances. Theirs is a compelling story which starkly illustrates the human toll of Alexander Lukashenka's regime in which human rights, democracy and the rule of law are violated with impunity.

These courageous women - Ludmilla Karpenko, Irina Krasovska, Tatiana Klimova and Svetlana Zavadska - conveyed their concerns about their husbands as well as about the continuing climate of fear in Belarus.

Earlier this month, I led a delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session, where I met with Anatoly Lebedko, one of the leaders of the Belarusian democratic opposition.

Belarusian presidential elections are quickly coming up -- on September 9. Unfortunately, the Belarusian authorities have not yet made a serious commitment to abide by criteria set forth well over a year ago by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which Belarus is a member. These criteria include an end of the climate of fear, equal access to the state media for all candidates, respect for freedom of assembly, as well as transparency and fairness in the registration of candidates and functioning of electoral commissions.

The Helsinki Commission, which I chair, continues to receive troubling reports concerning developments in Belarus. Indeed, the prospects for free and fair presidential elections this fall remain dim. The unbalanced composition of the regional electoral commissions is particularly disturbing given the apparent rejection by the authorities of all candidates - over 800-- proposed by Belarusian democratic parties and non-governmental organizations. The Belarusian authorities need to guarantee the impartiality of the electoral commissions by ensuring that democratic parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are represented meaningfully and to correct other reported violations of the electoral code.

The State Department has urged the Belarusian authorities to mount a credible investigation to account for missing former Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharenka, 13th Supreme Soviet Deputy Chairman Viktor Gonchar and his associate Anatoly Krasovsky, as well as Russian Television cameraman Dmitry Zavadsky. They have urged the immediate release of political prisoners and 13th Supreme Soviet members Andrei Klimov and Valery Shchukin. Such an investigation, as well as the release of political prisoners, will be an essential factor in reducing the current climate of fear.

Finally, the Belarusian authorities need to work with the OSCE to facilitate the work of international and domestic observers and to help ensure that all candidates are able to organize freely, without harassment, and carry their campaigns to the people.

Mr. President, while it is not yet too late for the Belarusian authorities to take the steps necessary to ensure an atmosphere conducive to elections that will meet international democratic standards, time is of the essence. Free and fair presidential elections are an essential step if Belarus is to move ahead and end its self-imposed isolation. As President Bush has remarked in connection with this week's observance of Captive Nations Week, America must remain vigilant in our support of those living under authoritarianism. The people of Belarus have that support as they seek to overcome the legacy of the past and build an independent nation based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Thank you, Mr. President.

Source: U.S. Congressional Record

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Following is the text of the statement by Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), made at the House Triangle Press Conference, July 20, 2001.

Today I have the honor of joining four courageous women from Belarus - Ludmilla Karpenko, Irina Krasovska, Tatiana Klimova and Svetlana Zavadska - whose husbands have disappeared, died under suspicious circumstances, or remain imprisoned. The cases of the disappeared and imprisoned are stark manifestations of the climate of fear that exists in Belarus under the rule of Alexander Lukashenka.

Last month, two former investigators in the Belarusian prosecutor's office made public allegations against leading Belarusian officials of organizing a death squad to liquidate opponents of the regime. According to the former investigators, such a death squad was responsible for the disappearances of Russian ORT Television cameraman Dmitry Zavadsky, 13th Supreme Soviet Vice-Chairman Viktor Gonchar and his associate Anatoly Krasovsky, and former Minister of Internal Affairs Yury Zakharenka.The State Department has said that the Belarusian investigators have made credible and detailed revelations and they take these allegations very seriously.The Belarusian authorities have not yet provided an accounting of the whereabouts of these people.

I am today releasing a letter I sent a few days ago to President Bush urging that he raise at the G-8 summit, and especially with Russian President Putin, concerns about the state of human rights and democracy in Belarus in advance of their September presidential elections.With presidential elections in Belarus coming up on September 9, I urged the President to convey our strong interest in a presidential election which meets international democratic standards.

Belarusian authorities must make a serious commitment to abide by criteria set forth by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which Belarus is a member.These criteria include an end of the climate of fear, access to the state media for all candidates, respect for freedom of assembly, and transparency and fairness in the registration of candidates and functioning of electoral commissions.

An essential component of the ending of the climate of fear means the appointment of a credible national independent commission of inquiry that would mount a thorough investigation into the disappearances and bring those responsible to account.

Another important component is the release of political prisoners Andrei Klimov and Valery Schukin.Finally, I call upon Belarusian authorities to release the autopsy results of Gennady Karpenko to Mrs. Karpenko.Accounting for the disappeared and dead would help dispel the ongoing climate of fear and create a atmosphere conducive to free and fair presidential elections.

I must state that we are not very encouraged by the way the election process is proceeding.We are concerned that the authorities have included virtually no representatives in territorial electoral commissions, out of over 800 proposed by Belarusian democratic parties and NGOs.We hope that serious steps will be taken to ensure the impartiality of these commissions.This is essential if you want to establish confidence that the election process will be a fair one.Moreover, this could help to facilitate trust between the government and opposition.Also essential in this context is the genuine independent domestic and international election observation effort under the auspices of the OSCE.

The last seven years of the Lukashenka regime have witnessed the marked deterioration of human rights and democracy in Belarus. Democratic elections require an all-encompassing atmosphere of trust and respect for human rights. Only by ending the current climate of fear and creating such an atmosphere of trust in advance of the elections can Belarus end its self-imposed isolation.The people of Belarus should know that we will stand by them and support their efforts to build an independent nation based on democracy and the rule of law.

Source: `Helsinki Commission News, July 20, 2001` **(http://www.csce.gov/**

U.S. Assessment of the Presidential Election in Belarus

U.S. Concerned about the Presidential Election in Belarus

Following is a statement delivered by Ambassador David T. Johnson, Chief of the U.S. Mission to the OSCE, to the Permanent Council in Vienna, on August 23, regarding the forthcoming presidential election in Belarus.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The United States shares the concerns that you and Mr. Duve have expressed with respect to the forthcoming elections in Belarus. We listened carefully this morning to our Belarusian colleague's presentation, but I must state candidly that we do not find it compelling. The late invitation and the visa denials to us constitute obstructions of ODIHR's observation efforts and are inconsistent with our common commitments made in Copenhagen and Istanbul. We call upon Belarus to cooperate fully with ODIHR's team now on the ground to issue visas to the two individuals who have previously been denied and to issue visas and accreditation rapidly to short-term observers.

Free and fair elections consistent with the Copenhagen Document and the criteria established by the OSCE Troika represent an opportunity for Belarus — an opportunity to end its isolation in Europe.

Unimpeded access to the media, the ability of domestic and international observers to do their work, and a political environment free from intimidation are essential components of a free and transparent electoral process and are principles to which we are all committed. The Belarusian Government's crackdown on the independent press, the domestic observation effort, and its own civil society call into question its intention to meet those standards. As Mr. Duve noted in his statement, Belarusian authorities seized 400,000 copies of a special edition newspaper that reported agreement of five opposition candidates to support the candidacy of Vladimir Goncharik. Last night, the Magic publishing house was raided again by tax police, its two printing presses were sealed, and its bank account frozen. In addition, two press runs of a neighboring press were seized including opposition candidate Goncharik's election commission-approved election pamphlet. If the opposition cannot even inform the public about who it is and cannot distribute government-approved literature, it is difficult to say that it enjoys fair access to the media.

Attacks on the independent observation network continue. Presidential and Election officials have publicly declared the domestic election network and the parallel vote tabulation illegal. The Ministry of Justice has declared the network an unregistered organization. Meanwhile, on August 17, tax police, assisted by the BKGB, seized computers and other equipment at the domestic observation network's central office.

In addition, over just the last two weeks, authorities have seized equipment used by NGOs across the country. In the Grodno oblast, two resource centers were raided and computers were seized. In

Orsha, a local branch of the Belarusian Free Trade Union and the independent newspaper Kutenia were raided and printing equipment seized. In Gomel, the Civil Initiative Center was raided, the center's deputy director was arrested, and computer equipment, manuals for domestic observers, and information material for voter mobilization were also seized.

These acts undermine confidence within the international community that the Belarusian authorities are committed to holding an election that meets OSCE standards. In this connection, respect for the central role of domestic and international election observation is crucial. We call on the Belarusian authorities to allow the domestic and international election network to conduct an unhindered observation.

This will require that observers, both domestic and international, enjoy uninterrupted overnight access to early voting and mobile voting, both of which, unobserved, provide opportunities for vote manipulation. They also need access to ballot distribution and the ballot box that is denied under the election code.

Precinct protocols currently are not subject to control once they leave the precinct for district and central re-tabulation. Such control is necessary to verify correspondence between the register and whoever signs it. In this and other crucial matters, we urge Belarusian authorities to implement ODIHR's recommendations.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, militia across Belarus have launched a sweep on activists of the youth movement Zubr. In Minsk, Vitebsk, and other towns, dozens of youth activists have been arrested, some solely for wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Time to Choose." These acts are contrary to Belarus' international commitments to free expression and association.

Mr. Chairman, the requirements for a free, fair, and transparent election are clear. Domestic and international respect for and relations with the government that emerges from a presidential election largely derive from confidence in its legitimacy. We thus urge Belarus to take all the necessary steps to meet international standards that will enable it to turn a new page in its relations with the international community.

Source: *US Embassy, Minsk, Belarus*
(http://www.usis.minsk.by/)

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U.S. Statement on the Results of Belarus' Presidential Election

Following is the text of the statement delivered by Ambassador David T. Johnson to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna an September 13, 2001.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For some time, the United States and others have been urging Belarus to guarantee to all its citizens the fundamental freedoms on which the Euro-Atlantic community and the OSCE have been built, as well as to live up to its obligations to establish fair conditions for its presidential elections. We have consistently called on Minsk to implement the commitments it made, and to live by the values it associated itself with upon becoming a member of this organization.

Regrettably, those calls have not been heeded.

According to the report by ODIHR's [OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] Limited International Election Observation Mission, the entire 2001 presidential election process has been marked by grave flaws and consistent interference by Belarusian authorities. As Ambassador [Gerard] Stoudmann has told us here today, ODIHR concluded that the election process "failed to meet the OSCE commitments for democratic elections."

The United States concurs with ODIHR's findings. We previously have catalogued the kinds of actions taken by Belarusian authorities to hinder the free and fair functioning of democracy. We very much regret that Belarus has not seized the opportunity to move away from isolation and toward integration. In our view, the incumbent's apparent success at the polls is meaningless.

Mr. Chairman, there was, however, a success last Sunday in Belarus that we should herald here. Citizens' organizations, including opposition political parties and groups comprised of individuals committed to the return of Belarus to the family of Euro-Atlantic democracies, sought to hold their own government to high OSCE standards of electoral fairness. These people and their organizations deserve our praise and support for their ongoing efforts.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working through the OSCE and its institutions with these individuals and their organizations to strengthen the elements of civil society in Belarus.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the United States reaffirms to the Belarusian people that we are committed to their well-being in a democratic Belarus. While it is unfortunate that the Lukashenko regime has pursued a course that isolates Belarus from Europe, we nevertheless remain engaged with the Belarusian people in ways that will promote a return to democracy, protection of human rights, and participation in the community of Euro-Atlantic nations.

Source: *US Embassy, Minsk, Belarus*
(http://www.usis.minsk.by/)

Wieck's Assessment Of Belarus' Presidential Election

Hans-Georg WIECK: "These were not free and fair elections, so our task continues"

BelaPAN interview with the head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus.

Mr. Wieck, could you tell us how you evaluate the recent electoral process in Belarus?

The existing constitutional and legal framework in Belarus creates conditions that favored and favor the incumbent president as a candidate in the presidential elections. The "vertical" structure [of the executive] insures the control over the electoral commissions. The control of the state over the mass media — the electronic mass media and major parts of the print media — favors the president. The provisions of the electoral law on the presentations of the candidates in the media were no compensation for the year-round control of the government over the media and the constant criticism and negative opinion against persons who are not supporting the government. So the framework conditions of the election were very unfavorable for the challenging candidates.

Framework conditions aside, do you think there were any serious problems in the actual organization of the voting process and the vote count?

These components of the electoral process also provided advantageous conditions for the president. First, the non-control and the non-monitoring of the ballot-boxes during early voting and

mobile voting. Second, the obstacles created for the observers to follow the actual voting - the checking of the voter lists and the checking of the incoming voters. Third, the procedure for the counting of the cast votes. A number of changes has been introduced into the actual vote counting and aggregation by the chairpersons of the precinct commissions, which opened the door for abuse. There were instances where mobile boxes were carried to 40 persons, but when the mobile box was opened it had 400 ballots cast. The discrepancy between the voting for [the incumbent Aleksandr] Lukashenko in the ballot boxes for early voting and the Lukashenko vote in the regular ballot-boxes was striking, enormous, and it cannot be explained.

Could it be explained by a possible trend that Lukashenko voters were more likely to vote early, because the main challenger Vladimir Goncharik had called on his supporters not to vote early?

Only marginally. Also, the results show a very interesting pattern in the regions and in the city of Minsk. In all regions the votes cast for Lukashenko differ very little, between 2 percent. It is very unusual, and it was much different [during the first presidential election in Belarus] in 1994. There is also a discrepancy between the votes cast and the actual voter turnout.

What are the sources of this information?

The domestic observation network and international observers.

What do you think of the work of the Independent Observation network of domestic observers? They have not released their figures of parallel vote tabulation. Does it mean that it has failed?

The parallel vote tabulation was planned for a situation as in the parliamentary by-election this March or in the parliamentary election of last year. This year, however, the protocols [of the vote count] already contained most of the changes. Most of the changes were undertaken at the precinct level, while in the past the changes were undertaken after the protocols, at a higher level, or by revising the protocols in the second report from stations.

Do you see any positive outcomes from this electoral process?

Of course. It is very important that the civil society was able to agree on a broad social and political basis centered at the political center, with elements to the left and to the right. I also draw your attention to the initial report of the three parliamentary delegations and the ODIHR, which emphasized the emergence of the political structure and the civil society. It went to identify the independent (and other) observer structures. There is no distinction between these groups of observation, because it is part of the social structure, it is part of the civil society. Third, we noted a large percentage of young people in the observation teams and in the initiative groups.

Do you think that many of those people can be now frustrated because of the violations they have seen?

It can be, but I am sure that this human potential will continue to work together and address new tasks in civil society and democracy-building.

Mr. Lukashenko has been accusing you and the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group of interfering in Belarus' internal affairs. He even promised to expel you, saying that there is no more work for AMG in Belarus any more. What role do you see for the AMG in the future?

Actually, Mr. Lukashenko has discontinued to threaten expulsion. He admitted that it was all about election. It is not a problem related to me personally. It is related to the relationships of Belarus with the OSCE since last year's parliamentary elections. At one time the target was Mr. Duve, the OSCE representative for the freedom of the media, at another moment it was the ODIHR, and another moment it was the AMG.

But what role do you see for the AMG after the elections?

The advise for the government, the opposition and the NGOs, as pointed out in the Istanbul summit declaration signed by President Lukashenko himself in November 1999. To support the dialogue for free and fair elections, and these were not free and fair elections, so our task continues.

Some analysts say that after securing his office Mr. Lukashenko will liberalize at least his economic policies and maybe his political stance. Others predict a harsher clampdown on the civil society. What is your opinion on this?

I cannot comment on this. I can only say that according to public opinion polls he has the support of about 45 percent. No one can explain how this jumped in the elections to 75 percent. We shall see what policy conclusions he draws from that.

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(http://elections.belapan.com)

Belarus Elections Declared Undemocratic

Following is the text of a statement by White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer on the presidential election in Belarus. The White House, Washington D.C. September 17, 2001

President Bush believes that Belarus and its people can and should be a part of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Unfortunately, severely flawed elections undermined chances that Belarus will have the opportunity to be a part of this vision for Europe in the near future. Not only did Aleksander Lukashenko, Europe's last dictator, steal the elections from the Belarusian people — for the moment, he also stole their opportunity to return to a path towards democracy and free market economy. This was a sadly-missed opportunity and a sad moment for a brave people, who suffer under a climate of fear.

The United States stands behind the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) international election observation mission reports, outlining the fundamentally flawed 2001 presidential election process. According to the report, the Belarusian elections "failed to meet the OSCE commitments for democratic elections."Elections that are neither free nor fair cannot be internationally recognized.

The United States will work with our European allies through our foreign assistance programs and through international organizations to promote a more hopeful future based on respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We extend our friendship and support to the people of Belarus and express our hope they will soon join with the other free nations of an undivided, democratic Europe that is now emerging.

CONTACT: White House Press Office, 202-456-2580

Source: *U.S. Embassy, Minsk, Belarus*
(http://www.usis.minsk.by/).

Belarus: Social and Health Issues

By David R. Marples

On June 5, the World Bank approved a $22.6 million loan for Belarus, the first such loan in seven years, with the goal of improving the system of heating, insulation, and lighting for buildings across the country, with a focus on schools and hospitals, orphanages, and homes for the elderly and aged.

ANALYSIS

For the past ten years, the social and health system of Belarus has been in a state of deep decay. The government of President Alyaksander Lukashenka has paid little attention to such issues, despite the fact that a major medical conference of 1998, and a nationwide census in 1999 provided disturbing revelations about the social issues in the country. In particular, these events indicated that a sharp decline in living standards since 1993, particularly in the rural regions, had contributed to social dilemmas that have affected the elderly and young people in particular.

This predicament is reflected first of all in the demographic picture in the republic. The population reached a peak of 10.32 million in 1993, but has declined thereafter. In the year 1999, the total was 10.02 million, a fall of 49,000 over the course of the year. For several years., the mortality rate has been up to 50% higher than the birth rate. The expected lifespan for women at birth is currently 74.4 years, or 5-8 years lower than in developed nations. For men, the figure is 62.8 years, up to 13 years less than countries of Western Europe or North America.

Official statistics tend to conceal the most pressing problems. Indeed, on paper, Belarus appears to be making reasonable economic progress. In the period January-April 2001, the rise in the GDP was 2% compared to the same period in 2000, while real disposable income has reportedly increased by 23%. With a small hiccup caused by the financial crisis in Russia in the autumn of 1998, Belarus' economic performance on paper has remained strong. The figures, however, belie the fact that the majority of the population has seen the greatest fall in living standards over the past decade than at any time since the Second World War.

Perhaps the most notable factor in this decline has been the situation in the towns. Today, almost 70% of residents of Belarus live in urban settlements. Over the past decade, the mortality rate in the cities for men of working age has risen by 36.5%, and correspondingly by 24.1% for women. The biggest rise in mortality occurred in men of the age group 35-39 — almost one-third of the total.

What caused this problem? Discussions in the republic have relied less on statistics than general comments. These would suggest four major reasons for the high mortality rates among young men and women. First, there is the generally poor health and ecological situation in the republic, particularly in industrial regions, such as the "factory district" in the city of Minsk. Second, is the rise in alcoholism and drug addiction. Third, is smoking "on a mass scale." About 70% of smokers are men, but young women are especially taking up the habit. Lastly, poor nutrition is blamed for the situation — the unavailability or high prices of adequate food products.

Although urban problems have multiplied, the situation in the villages remains considerably worse. The mortality level in the villages is 56% higher than in the towns. Here, three main reasons are cited. First, alcoholism is more widespread than in the towns and has caused a chronic shortage of workers in the rural areas of the republic. Second, accidents on the farm are widespread and often fatal as a result of people operating equipment or driving vehicles in an intoxicated state. Accidents also occur because of a failure to operate or repair machines properly. Thirdly, the level of health protection in the village is catastrophically low. One solution — to provide a travelling medical service for village residents — is generally nullified by poor or even impassable rural roads. Many villages have appalling levels of sanitary conditions.

It has been calculated that the mortality rate among country people aged 20-24 is three times higher than in the towns, and 2.4 times higher for the subsequent age group of 25-29 years. The mortality rate is more or less even only for the population over the age of 70.

The villages suffer from several other drawbacks. The water quality is poor. The buildings used for hospitals and clinics are in need of renovation or repair. One-third of them were built prior to 1941, and 50% of the medical equipment used therein is said to be obsolete, and has been in use for more than a decade. Some 40% of hospital beds are unsuitable for patients, and are either in poor shape or simply too small for the average patient. Almost two-thirds of rural hospitals lack a supply of hot water.

Some of these problems came to light during the aftermath of the 1986 Chernobyl accident, when large-scale medical attention was deemed necessary for the rural population for the first time. Chernobyl also contributed to the large-scale migration from rural areas to the towns that has led to depopulation of some villages, particularly in the Homel region to the south-east, the region most affected by high-level radioactive fallout, and correspondingly, the centre of a virtual epidemic of thyroid gland cancers among young children (today it affects mainly an age group of older children and young adults).

The Chernobyl disaster took from circulation, at least for the immediate future, about 25% of the agricultural land of Belarus. It continues to affect an area that contains 2.2 million people, including about 400,000 children. Much of the danger today lies in the food supply and the state of the soil, but also of importance has been the social and psychological impact of the accident.

The additional dilemma of a drop in living standards after independence has contributed to children's problems. For schoolchildren, the Soviet era provided a relatively comfortable existence, with free school lunches provided by collective and state farms, enterprises and construction organizations. Today the supply of food to schools has fallen by 40%, and the situation at beginning rural schools is especially critical. The enterprises that used to provide this food are no longer receiving regular wage supplies and the children's parents cannot generally afford to pay the high prices for adequate food for their children.

Women have traditionally played a role in the workforce since the Second World War, and especially in sectors such as health and education. About 50% of those occupied in the national economy are women, and their level of education is somewhat higher than that of Belarusian men. At the same time, they tend to be the first to be unemployed (60% of the unemployed are women) and susceptible to downturns on the job market.

The gloomy economic picture may also account for another factor in the social predicament of Belarus, namely the extraordinary high levels of divorce. In 1980, for example, the republic reported 3.2 divorces for every 10 marriages. Today the figure is around 6.0. The one-parent family, and particularly the fatherless family, has become the norm. On average, the Belarusian family has 1.5 children, and the figures have shown a tendency to fall rather than rise. Often,

parents maintain they cannot afford to have more children, or else they choose not to raise children in such a forbidding environment with few prospects, or the brevity of the marriage precludes more children. However, even if this birth rate is maintained, then the population will fall by 50% over the next five decades. The most pessimistic observers (they include the "national" poet Svetlana Alekseevich) have thus forecast the future extinction of the Belarusian nation.

The economic decline has been accompanied by a general rise in morbidity in the republic (about 12% for all types of illnesses since 1991), and particularly in the increase of certain types of diseases. These latter include particularly respiratory ailments, tuberculosis, cancer of the stomach, sexually transmitted diseases (especially syphilis), and HIV, study of which is in its infancy, as is illustrated by the fact that according to official statistics, 60% of HIV cases emanate from the Soligorsk mining region, and most of the rest from the city of Minsk. It is evident that HIV cases are spreading rapidly but they are not yet the focus of official concern. Diabetes is striking children of younger age groups.

PERSPECTIVES

Given the dramatic scale of the social and health problems facing Belarus, it is plain that the World Bank loan can be no more than a small first step toward an international recognition of the country's social problems. However, political questions have long taken priority. In turn, the determination of the president to crack down on foreign influence in the country has made life more difficult for independent humanitarian aid groups. Slowly the government has taken control of such aid, so that today all those working in Belarus are obliged at some stage to deal with government agencies.

Gradually the government has cut back on the amount of aid budgeted for health questions and those devoted to the problems relating to Chernobyl. To some extent such a reduction can be justified. Few countries could afford to devote almost a quarter of the national budget to health issues, as was the case in Belarus prior to the Lukashenka regime. Chernobyl-related issues have also been identified with the political opposition. Moreover, the Lukashenka regime has identified its concerns with those of farmers and the rural population generally. This is an ageing sector of the population, and over one-third of rural residents are now pensioners. The government has paid such pensions regularly but it has taken few steps to overcome the deplorable living conditions in the villages, which lack roads, sanitation, access to health care centres, and often to adequate educational facilities.

Belarus will be obliged for some time to depend upon foreign aid for its acute social problems, but to date the government has rarely highlighted these issues either to its own public or the outside world. What is required is either a national program for the radical improvement of health and social facilities, or else external aid from agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank. The World Bank loan may therefore be the start of a new direction, but if so it would mark a significant change of direction for the Lukashenka government.

Dr. David Marples is Professor of History, Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta .

A Past That Can't Be Expunged

By Paul Goble

WASHINGTON, July 26, 2001 — Vandals have destroyed a monument near Minsk to the victims of Stalin-era mass murders in Belarus, an official of the opposition Belarusian Popular Front said last week

Uladzimir Yukho suggested that this action appears to represent an attempt to expunge from the record one of the most notorious events in Belarusian history and one of the most important sources of the Belarusian national movement over the last two decades.

Yukho noted that the small granite memorial presented to the people of Belarus by then-U.S. President Bill Clinton when he visited that site in 1994 had served as a focal point for the Belarusian opposition.

The discovery in the 1980s of the Kurapaty mass graves helped to power the rise of the Belarusian democratic movement. Activists of the Popular Front say that the graves, located in a forest near the national capital, contain the remains of hundreds of thousands killed in the 1930s. But officials of the current Belarusian regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenka have attempted to play down the importance of Kurapaty and insist that there are no more than 7,000 dead buried there.

No one has yet claimed responsibility for the defacement of this monument, and no one has been arrested or identified as a suspect. But the significance of this monument for the country's democratic movement and the timing of this attack may lead at least some in the Belarusian opposition to suspect that supporters of Lukashenka have somehow been involved. If that is in fact the case, recent history suggests, no one is ever likely to be charged or convicted of this crime.

That will certainly have consequences because from the time of the discovery of the mass graves at Kurapaty, they have been one of the prime motivating factors behind the country's national and democratic movements. Indeed, most activists in those movements over the last decade have sought to honor the Kurapaty site, frequently insisting that people coming to Belarus must go there to understand that country and its past.

Indeed, as Yukho made clear to Western news agencies last week, Belarusian democrats were at the site as recently as last week and thus are in a position to date more or less precisely when the destruction of the monument took place. Moreover, the fact that the American government erected this monument is for many Belarusian democrats a symbol of the interest of the West in Belarusian independence and democracy.

Consequently, many democratic activists there are certain to blame the Lukashenka regime and its supporters for this action — all the more so since the destruction of this monument took place just as the Belarusian opposition has joined forces to advance a single candidate to run against Lukashenka in presidential elections now scheduled for 9 September.

So far, the destruction of the Kurapaty monument has attracted relatively little attention in either the Belarusian or international media. But because of its centrality in the life of many Belarusians, the demolition of this monument may have consequences very different than some might expect and lead to greater activism by the democratic opposition in Belarus.

Indeed, this action in Belarus this week recalls one of the more infamous stories of the Cold War. Once, when he came to the United Nations, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev warned the Greek prime minister that if Athens continued to support NATO and the West, it might be necessary for Moscow to attack the Acropolis with nuclear weapons.

The Greek leader responded that Mr. Khrushchev might very well be able to destroy the buildings on the Acropolis but that the Soviet leader would never be able to destroy the ideas of democracy and freedom that the Greeks gave birth to more than two millennia ago. In like manner, the vandalization at Kurapaty is unlikely to expunge the memory of the events it commemorates.

Paul Goble is Director of Communications and Technology, RFE/RL and Publisher of RFE/RL Newsline.

Source: *RFE/RL Poland, Belarus and Ukraine Report.*

Moscow the Likely Winner of Presidential Election in Belarus

Belarusan President Alyaksandr Lukashenka is impregnably positioned for reelection to a five-year term in the upcoming electoral parody. He has the choice of staging either a first-round landslide on September 9 or, for extra window dressing, a runoff victory two weeks later. Irrespective of the actual returns, however, Lukashenka will be the formal and Moscow the real winner in this exercise.

A fraudulent reelection of Lukashenka will only be recognized by Moscow, its willing or unwilling CIS allies, and a gallery of rogue and communist-ruled states. His new term of office will be marked by political illegitimacy, which was not the case in his first five-year term. Moreover, Lukashenka will have owed his reelection partly to Russia's direct and indirect economic subsidies and political support.

With a weakened and more dependent Lukashenka in office, Moscow will be well placed to increase its control of Belarus for the long term. This trend is already in evidence on four fronts. The first is that of governing personnel, including Russian carpetbaggers and career officers of Russia's security services, whom Lukashenka promoted in Minsk when embarking on the election year. The second track is the military-strategic, which is in practice the fast track of the Russia-Belarus Union State. The third direction is the economic, where Moscow is enmeshing Minsk in a dependency relationship, planned to deepen during Lukashenka's next term of office. The fourth is the political, with Lukashenka and the Kremlin now preparing a Constitutional Act of the Union State and the direct election of a joint parliament, both to be consummated following Lukashenka's reelection.

In several recent interviews and statements, an agitated Lukashenka has listed some of his "services" to Russia in an implicit plea for post-election backing. He cited the Belarusan "shield," protecting the approaches to Russia in the air and on land; rent-free hosting of Russian radars; guaranteed and cheap transit of Russia's trade with Western Europe; and predominant status of the Russian language in Belarus.

In his seven years thus far as president, Lukashenka has staunchly resisted the penetration of Belarus by Russian private capital. His top priorities all along were the maintenance of state ownership and of his undivided control of the economy of Belarus. At this point, however, Lukashenka's resistance appears to unravel. He and other Belarusan officials are currently engaged for the first time in serious discussions with Russian business about privatization of Belarusan state enterprises. Lukoil, Itera, Russian Aluminum and other Russian companies are eyeing Belarusan energy, automotive and chemical plants.

The stake in this election, then, is not the presidential office itself, but the effective control over Belarus in the post-election period. By supporting the anti-democratic incumbent president, Moscow seems set to tighten its own hold over this strategic salient into Central Europe. From Moscow's viewpoint, this will be the most convenient form of control: maximum leverage with minimal direct responsibility for the internal political situation in Belarus. (Survey based on recent Russian and Belarusan media reporting.)

Source: *Monitor, September 5, 2001*
(http://www.jamestown.org)

Whither the Belarusan Democratic Opposition?

Belarus offers a case study—with parts of Ukraine and Moldova providing additional examples — of a former imperial periphery in which Soviet political socialization succeeded only too well. Ten years after the end of Soviet rule in Belarus, the effects of that socialization work in Russia's favor, ensured the reelection of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on September 9, and proved yet again an insuperable obstacle to the Belarusan national-democratic forces. Those political forces and their natural allies in the West have yet to find their way out of that dilemma.

The coalition that tried to unseat Lukashenka in this campaign differed significantly from its earlier incarnations, and was a far cry indeed from the national-democratic movement of the early 1990s. This time around, the Popular Front played a minor role, as the opposition found its center of gravity in nomenklatura groups that had turned against Lukashenka from within the system, and were purged by him in recent years.

The opposition's presidential candidate, Uladzimir Hancharyk, is the long-serving chairman of the Soviet-era Trade Union Federation. His competitors for the joint candidate's post were former Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir, former Defense Minister Pavel Kazlouski, former Hrodna Region Governor Syamyon Domash, and the Party of Communists leader Syarhey Kalyakin. Once Hancharyk won that competition, the five agreed to form a joint presidential council in the event that Hancharyk won the election. In the final stage of the campaign, "the Five" were joined by former Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Marynich, who resigned his latest post as doubly accredited ambassador to Latvia and Lithuania.

The campaign manager for the opposition, Vasyl Lyavonau, is a former agriculture minister imprisoned by Lukashenka on trumped-up corruption charges. Former Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Sannikau—leader of the Belarusan Charter 99 group, modeled on the Czech Charter 77—and former Deputy Prime Minister Leanid Sinitsyn also joined the opposition's campaign. The former chairmen of parliament Stanislau Shushkevich, Mechislau Hryb and Syamyon Sharetski—the last from exile in Lithuania—strongly supported the opposition, Hryb as head of the observers tasked with a parallel vote count. Former Central Bank president Stanislau Bahdankevich is the top economic specialist in opposition ranks. The opposition figures who "disappeared" and are feared killed include Yury Zakharenka, a major

general and former internal affairs minister, and Viktar Hanchar, formerly a deputy prime minister, Central Electoral Commission chief and CIS Court chairman. All these former officials had a taste of national independence in 1991-95, as well as exposure to the West while in office and especially thereafter. They are determined to avoid satellization by Russia and the utter impoverishment of the country through Lukashenka's socialist economics. Yet the presidential election showed that this "revolt of the exnomenklatura" was no match for the combined resources of Lukashenka and Moscow.

This campaign witnessed the third major attempt by the opposition, in the space of ten years, to devise a successful organizational and programmatic formula. In the process, the opposition gradually changed its complexion, the net effect being a steady shift from the right to the center and left-of-center. In 1991-94, the opposition was synonymous with the Popular Front (PF), which fought against the then-dominant parliament. Under its firebrand leader Zyanon Paznyak, the PF failed to differentiate between pro-independence, pro-reform groups in that parliament and the pro-Moscow Reds in that body. The PF attacked both, but it only damaged the moderates, and split the ranks of those intent on freeing Belarus from the Soviet past. In society at large, the PF lost many more supporters than it could ever gain through nationalist rhetoric in a country with a weak sense of national identity. It therefore did not gain a single seat in the last free parliamentary elections, before Lukashenka came to power. That ended the national-democratic opposition's first attempt at existing and functioning.

Following Lukashenka's election in 1994, the parliamentary leaders—mostly the same ones the PF had targeted--not only moved into open opposition to the authorities, but as well formed the opposition's focus. They fought tooth and nail against Lukashenka's 1996 "constitutional coup," rejected the results of the presidentially staged referendum and refused to recognize the new constitution which gave Lukashenka absolute powers. In 1996, as in 2001, it was Moscow's intercession that tipped the balance in Belarus in favor of Lukashenka.

The dissolved parliament's leaders—Shushkevich, Hryb, Syamyon Sharetski and the late Henadz Karpenka among them —formed a forty-five-strong rump parliament, which enjoyed uninterrupted recognition by the Western democracies and the new democracies in Central and Baltic Europe. Incumbent Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir and a few other senior officials of the executive branch broke with Lukashenka in protest and joined the parliamentary opposition. Meanwhile, the extraparliamentary Popular Front underwent a split and a partial clarification process. Paznyak's group quit and moved to a radical-rightist fringe, while the main PF sought a rapprochement with the leaders of the dissolved—though legitimate—parliament and with government officials who turned against Lukashenka.

The programmatic ground for such a rapprochement proved elusive, however. Although numerically small, the opposition groups were then—and are still—divided over the scope and pace of desirable economic reforms, language and national questions, attitudes toward Russia and inevitable personality issues. Yet all these groups managed to form a coalition in 1999 to contest the presidential election due that year. When Lukashenka, acting unlawfully, extended his term of office by two years, the opposition nevertheless held its own presidential balloting, fielding Chyhir as its joint candidate. It claimed that many voters took part and that Chyhir won that symbolic balloting. That ended the opposition's second attempt at devising a viable formula for itself and for contesting elections under adverse circumstances, unparalleled in post-communist Europe.

Apart from the programmatic differences, the division of labor among opposition groups also proved contentious. The well-organized PF was--and still is--in a position to supply thousands of dedicated activists in any election, but its leaders lack experience in government or modern economic and technical training, and are still misperceived as dangerous "nationalists" by many ordinary voters. The former officials, on the other hand, have both experience and a measure of public credibility, but they lack effective political organization and depend on the PF for grassroots work in any election.

This year's presidential election witnessed the opposition's third metamorphosis. The coalition this time firmly put its nomenklatura foot forward. Yet this group itself had ascended a learning curve since the preceding elections. Had they won this time, there can be little doubt that they would have pursued a balanced course between Russia and the West--including neighboring Poland and the Baltic states--and that they would have initiated market reforms, as well as giving the Belarusan language and national identity a new lease on life. Now, the opposition itself needs a new lease on life and a new formula in the interval until the next elections.

Source: *Monitor, September 14, 2001.*

BELARUS' FORUM

Political Leaders and NGO's Demand Re-Vote

Excerpts from a statement by a public coalition in Belarus.

September 14, 2001 — The first round of presidential elections, that took place in the Republic of Belarus on September 9, proved convincingly that Lukashenka and his authoritarian regime do not have the popular support to govern Belarus.

Most Belarusians do not want to have the rotten and criminal regime ruling over them for another five years. This was evident in numerous sociological polls carried out during the election campaign in addition to parallel vote tabulation, comparative data obtained by independent observers at precincts, and from exit polls.

According to presidential candidate Goncharyk's headquarters board, at least 41% of the legitimate ballots were cast in their favor and no more than 47% were for Lukashenka. According to the law, when no candidate clearly receives at least 50% of the votes cast, a second round of voting should be held, with the participation of the two top vote getters. Undoubtedly, in that round, Vladimir Goncharyk will win.

Realizing this, the horrified Belarusian regime used the full power and weight of the state bureaucracy and special services to rig the first round of balloting in Lukashenka's favor. The goal of these abuses is clear: the Belarusian dictator and his henchmen are seeking to delay their ultimate defeat and total political excision.

Therefore as a result of blatant and utterly cynical violations of electoral procedures during the preparation and implementation of the September 9, 2001 presidential elections, an illicit seizure of the supreme power in the country has taken place.

These are the facts:

The ballot outcome, published by the Central Elections Commission, according to which the winner gained 75% of the vote, were achieved due to the massive addition of bogus ballots for Lukashenka, and the removal of legitimate ballots cast for Goncharyk.

Having thus forfeited any right to claim victory, the Belarusian usurper and his accomplices are now preparing to completely annihilate the political opposition and smother the nation's struggle for freedom. Realizing that the domestic and international communities will never recognize the fabricated election results, and that the broad popular coalition now in existence and growing won't stop fighting for the restoration of the rule of law in the country, the regime decided to deliver a preemptive strike.

Accordingly, we do not recognize the officially announced results of the September 9 presidential ballot, and insist on their nullification and a revote.

We appeal to the international community to pressure the Belarusian authorities to annul the official voting results and schedule new elections.

The misguided followers of Lukashenka, and Lukashenka himself must now decide, in the face of the inevitable day of reckoning before domestic and international legal authority, to do the right thing and invalidate the sham election.

We urge the Belarusian nation not to succumb to the regime's threats and blackmail, and to seek the restoration of legitimate governance via constitutional methods.

We are calling on the Belarusian and international communities to manifest vigilance and not to tolerate continued terror and arbitrariness in the middle of Europe.

Source: *Charter 97 Press Center, September 14, 2001*

A Pillar of Shame

By Ludmila Griaznova,

The Republic of Belarus (Belarusian SSR at that time and in the Brezhnev era) signed the international Helsinki documents on human rights. According to these documents the state guaranteed the inviolability of the individual. These embodied promises including an immunity from political murder, disappearances, torture and unlawful arrests. Also there were assurances of the right to a fair trial, of civil liberties, a freedom of expression, to peaceful assembly and organization, of worship and the political right of citizens to change their government. It is being acknowledged that the citizenry has full rights to the aforementioned freedoms, if it happens that the state cannot fulfill them, the pressure on it to rectify the situation is justified.

Informing the world of human rights violations, especially those committed during the presidential election campaign, is a way to nail the transgressors to the PILLAR OF SHAME.

In the first two weeks of September 2001 numerous politically motivated arrests took place. Among those detained were:

-Members of **Uladzimer Hancaryk's** headquarters staff in Mahilou,

-**Alaksandr Fiodarau**, coordinator of "Independent Monitoring", Sklou and the monitor **Vladimir Vosipau,**

-Two **'Zubr' activists** in the Mahilou region,

-**Raman Burakou**, member of "Independent Monitoring", Smalavichy,

-**Opposition activists from Vorsa** who traveled to Minsk on September 9,

-**Mikola Markievic**, Editor-in-Chief of *Pahonia* and his co-worker **Paval Mazejka,**

-Opposition activists **Valentin Askierka, Sviatlana Niech, Jauhien Klimau and Siarhiej Malcyk,**

-Seven **'Zubr' activists from Krycau** who traveled to Minsk on election day, and,

-'Zubr' activists from Minsk: **Alaksiej Sydlouski, Cimafiej Drancuk, Jauhien Afnagel,**

Baptist pastor **Piotra Mazejka** from Sarkauscyna was detained for expressing his condolences to the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in the United States.

So, by means of detentions and threats and pursuit of criminal charges the authorities put out of commission the most active opposition forces during the election campaign.

The Belarusian authorities cannot accept such notions as a pluralism of opinions and the Freedom of Expression and the Press. A collective farm mode of operation—that the society must be of one common opinion—is embedded into the heads of state officials. These policies were employed by the authorities with a most odious zeal during the election campaign.

The following examples of this policy are from just the first half of September:

1) The September 5 issue of the newspaper *Narodnaja Vola* was printed late since the censor Vladimir Hlusakou, deputy chairman of the State Committee on the Press, banned the preelection essay "Lukashenka is the Past, Hancaryk is the Future".

2) A criminal action was brought against the newspaper *Pahonia.* Production equipment and the print run of the newspaper's special election issue were confiscated.

3) The newspaper *Narodnaja Vola* was censored such that blank spaces appeared on pages where information on a public rally on October Square on September 9 at 8 P.M. was to be placed. The journalists were indignant and refused to place other material in the censored spots.

4) *Viciebsk Business News* was not printed by the state-run printing house because it contained articles about presidential candidate Hancaryk.

5) On election day a concerted disruption of telecommunications took place in Belarus.

a) Access to the Internet sites of independent political and election monitoring groups was blocked by the state monopoly server "Beltelekom".

b) Broadcasts of foreign television channels to Belarus through satellite transmitters "Mir" and the European Transmitting Center were stopped.

c) Telephones of non-governmental organizations involved in election monitoring were disconnected.

In addition to the freedom of expression, Belarusian authorities do not tolerate the freedom to assemble and the freedom to organize.

For example:

1) In an act of intimidation, the leader of "Young Front", **Paval Sieviaryniec** was interrogated by Belarusian KGB officers about his alleged involvement in the grenade blast which occurred outside the Russian embassy.

2) **Dzmitry Bukatau** was expelled from the Mahilou Polytechnic for his alleged participation in Zubr activities.

3) The headquarters of the **Association of Belarusian Students** was searched, printed information on the election was confiscated.

4) Equipment was confiscated from the Mahilou branch of the **Leu Sapieha Foundation** and the Sklou branch of **"Voters' Club."**
5) There was an attempted break-in at the offices of **"Charter '97."**
6) Two explosive devices were thrown into the **HART youth center in Homiel.**

Lastly, events in Belarus show that its citizens are deprived of their Right to Change the Government. Ordinary citizens are misled and those who are activists are persecuted. As a result it is not the people who decide who will govern, but the authorities. Due to the neutralization of the independent monitors pseudo-elections were organized by the state-run mass media and the "vertical" system of authority and election commissions.

In September the complicity of persons in the mass media in this unjust and perverse enterprise was demonstrated vividly.
1) In many regions of Belarus, candidate Hancaryk's speech on radio was disrupted.
2) On September 4 a preelection show was held in support of Lukasenka. Other candidates were not given the opportunity to hold such a function.
3) Regional newspapers were directed to reprint Lukashenka's platform.
4) On September 8, a speech by Lukashenka was broadcast, in violation of the Belarusian Constitution and the Electoral Code.
5) **Mail carriers** were made to deliver a special issue of *Sovetskaja Belorussia*, dedicated to Lukasenka.

Election Commissions, including the Central Election Commission were responsible for a string of violations of the letter and spirit of the law.
1) Reprimands were issued only to Hancaryk.
2) The Foreign Affairs Ministry and overseas offices released a storm of election falsifications.
3) The Central Election Commission handed out ballot sheets upon presentation of any document with a photo and a stamp.
4) Ballot boxes were unsealed during the 'pre-voting' process.
5) Observer **Kirienko** at polling station #23 on the grounds of School #89 in Minsk had detained persons that were seen stuffing ballot boxes. By order of Mr. Turin of the local election commission they were let go.

The network of independent observers was virtually neutralized by the regime.
1) The Electoral Code was filled with arbitrary rules which limited observers rights and powers.
2) In the time leading up to the election, independent observers faced building threats and intimidation, essentially a form of psychological warfare, wrought on them by the regime.
3) Those observers from the **Viasna** and **Leu Sapieha** foundations who represented the **"Independent Observer"** initiative were denied accreditation on election.
4) Observers were not allowed to use their mobile telephones and were followed by police and threatened with charges (Source: **P.S. Migurski**).
5) For the consumption of international observers, the regime prepared 'model' polling stations and provided sample prepared statements on observations which depicted activities and conditions in a favorable light.
6) Most neutral outside observers were denied visas to Belarus. In September those that were turned away reportedly included the Swedish Social Democrats: **Oscar Stenstrem, Sonny Frederiks, Suzanna Lif-Gariti, Lisa Pelling, Eric Clifford and Christopher Niman.**

Ludmila Griaznova is a member of the Charter'97 organizing committee.
Source: *Charter '97 Press Center, September 28, 2001*

The Forgotten Neighbor

By A. Naumczyk, E. Mironowicz, P. Kazanecki, G. Gromadzki

Introduction

The present report is the fourth of a series of planned Policy Papers, which will present the views of Polish non-governmental communities concerning those international issues that are important from the point of view of European integration. This project was initiated by the Stefan Batory Foundation,
The report was prepared in co-operation with the East European Democratic Center — IDEE.

Belarus is a neighbour of three countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Poland – which in a few years should find themselves in the enlarged European Union. Relations with that country, numbering over 10 million inhabitants, will be one of the important issues of EU external policy, similarly as the relations with Ukraine or dialogue with Russia concerning the Kaliningrad Oblast'. The European Union, both on the level of the European Commission and of the individual member countries, seems not to be fully aware of this fact as yet.

The reasons behind the lack of interest in Belarus on the part of the EU are various. Certainly one of them is that for the present members of the Union that state is a "distant country", with which no one borders. Another very significant factor is the widespread belief that Belarus is basically a part of Russia, which is proven by the agreements on their integration signed by the two states since the mid nineteen-nineties. But probably the most important cause of Belarus being ignored is the lack of a concept of policy orientation toward that country. The European Union has so far been helpless with regard to the undemocratic activities of the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. All the above mentioned reasons have contributed to the situation, whereby the EU has not found it opportune to develop any common strategy with respect to Belarus, analogous to the documents on Russia and Ukraine. Not only the EU has a dilemma what to do about Belarus. Difficulties with the conduct of a policy with respect to that country are also visible in the case of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. These countries devote much more attention to it, however, than the Union.

In order to understand the situation prevailing in Belarus it is necessary to examine the Belarusian society and the political elite of that country. Therefore, the first part of this paper is devoted exactly to these issues. The resulting conclusions will enable to formulate the recommendations, which constitute the second part of this paper.

I. Social and Political Situation in Belarus

1. Society

The society of Belarus is strongly divided in its opinions concerning all of the important issues of public life. The division lines sometimes run parallel to differences between generations, sometimes however they reflect the availability of access to alternative sources of information and the level of education of the given community. The distinction between the parts of society originating from the East and the West of the country also remains vivid. It is especially reflected in political attitudes.

The world outlook and the value system of the young generation, the consciousness of which was shaped in the period of disintegration of the Soviet Union and the creation of the Belarus state is remarkably different from that presented by the elderly

and middle-aged people. A generation has already grown up, which has not been acquainted with any other motherland than independent Belarus, which emerged as a result of the collapse of the USSR in 1991. It is currently difficult to find young Belarusians who would think with nostalgia about the nonexistent Soviet Union. Such attitudes, however, are rather widespread among the middle aged and elderly generations. This is not to say that young people generally identify themselves with the opposition. Society at large generally does not trust the political class. This scepticism is particularly manifest among the younger generations.

The fairly high level of education, access to the internet and the increasing mobility of Belarusian youth, allow them to compare the ethical attitudes and quality of thought of their own political class with similar values represented by European politicians. The young generation has already drifted way beyond the soviet world, whereas the politicians, even those in opposition, are still strongly rooted in the past. Even when presenting extremely anti-communist attitudes, they apply notions and visions of politics and society that are characteristic of the soviet political elite.

The pro-Russian orientation of the regime of Lukashenko is not in contradiction with the expectations of Belarusian society. This results, above all, from the family connections of the citizens of Belarus, 30% of whom have close relatives in Russia. Many Belarusians have been educated at Russian universities or have started their political and professional careers there. Together with Russians they have served in the soviet army. These factors create a specific system of ties with the citizens of Russia, which no politician aspiring to leading positions in Minsk can afford to ignore.

This does not mean, however, that the policy of integration between Belarus and Russia realised by Lukashenko enjoys full popular support. The acceptance of close economic, political and military cooperation with Russia is not accompanied by approval for the limitation of national sovereignty. The Belarusians mainly fear the prospects of sending their own soldiers to Chechnya or to Russian garrisons in Central Asia.

The existence of the Belarus state is particularly valuable to some 20% of the inhabitants of Belarus who nurture strong feelings of national identity. That part of the nation is in favour of as broad use of the Belarusian language in the offices and schools as possible. It also refers to historical traditions related with Belarusian culture and statehood. For that part of society the regime of Lukashenko, which promotes the Russian language and looks down on its vision of Belarusian history, is anti-national.

Most of the remaining 80 % of Belarusian society does not negate the need for the existence of the Belarusian state. The acceptance of Belarusian statehood increases in society together with the exchange of generations. It may be assumed that together with the vanishing of the generation which remembers the USSR with nostalgia, the problem of acceptance of Belarus as an independent state will cease to exist.

Over the past ten years hundreds of Belarusians have visited different European countries. Being able to compare Europe and Russia, they opt rather in favour of Europeanising Belarus. Over half of the inhabitants of Belarus are in favour of the entry of their country to the European Union. The problem is, however, that there prevails a general lack of belief in the possibility of changes that could bring it about.

Democracy, the framework of which was constructed in the years 1990-1994, has not been accepted by the Belarusian people. A large part of the citizens still associate it with anarchy, inflation and empty shelves in the shops. The lack of self-government institutions leads to the situation that the only manifestations of democracy consist of parliamentary and presidential elections. Most people, however, perceive them as a technical operation, consisting of the formal approval for state authorities which have been selected earlier. Most Belarusians also believe in the effectiveness of the system based on a powerful leader, who is personified by Mr Alexander Lukashenko. It is only among the intelligentsia and the young people that attitudes favouring the democratisation of the country along the lines of the European model prevail.

The rule of Lukashenko has reinforced the lack of belief in the feasibility of democratic solutions. The elections and referenda, which have turned into a political farce justifying the authoritarian government, have compromised the basic instruments of democracy. The generally accepted attitude is to shun the law in daily life, resulting from the conviction that it just legitimises a fictitious world. Moreover, it would be too naive to apply legal norms that are not seriously treated even by their creators.

Most of the inhabitants of Belarus live in poverty. The wages, equivalent to several dozen or so EURO per month are insufficient to cover the basic costs of subsistence, in spite of the still low housing costs and utility charges. The situation of the inhabitants of rural areas is especially dramatic. Without the food coming from the small household plots and gardens, which they can cultivate, their existence would be impossible. But also most of the urban dwellers, from university professors to workers, cultivate such lots. The crops from such household cultivation provide some 30 % of the food consumed in Belarus.

A large part of the citizens of that country, however, disposes of monetary assets several times higher than their official disposable income. This is the effect of the peculiar treatment of the law in that country. No tax office is able to assess the incomes of thousands of people involved in cross-border trade. The whole Belarusian business world operates on similar principles. Employees of private firms, in order to evade the excessive taxation, usually officially receive only a part of the amount their due remuneration for their work. The remaining part is handed over by the employers without leaving any traces in the accounting documents, which would give evidence of any such cash transfer.

The shadow economy in Belarus, in spite of the existence of inflated fiscal inspection services, emerged in reaction to the excessive fiscal orientation of the state. In principle, any business activity conducted in compliance with the law would generate a deficit. The general reaction of the Belarusians is therefore to conceal their wealth. Persons declaring monthly incomes of Euro 50 are in possession of new motor cars, high-tech computer equipment and prefer to relax in the fashionable recreation centres and spas in Europe. Most people perceive wealth as the fruit of dishonest dealings. This is why Lukashenko's rhetorical statements announcing the combat of corruption and organised crime are received with acceptance, and especially welcome are the spectacular actions of arresting the directors of great state-owned enterprises in front of television cameras. The average Belarusian citizen is convinced that he is the victim of incessant theft by dishonest officials, salesmen and employers, but never considers the significance of his own actions consisting of the evasion or infringement of the law.

The political consciousness of the Belarusian citizens is mainly shaped under the influence of the mass media. The events in the world are most often assessed by the Belarusians in terms of categories used by the commentators of popular Russian television channels. They are also more emotionally concerned about what is going on in Russia rather than in Belarus. The situation in their own country is generally regarded as the outcome of political dealings taking place in Moscow. The boring Belarusian television is basically no competition for a number of the more attractive Russian television stations. The information system existing in Belarus, in which the Russian television stations play a dominant role, on the one hand brings the citizens into the habit of treating their own country as a Russian province, and on the other hand, over a number of years it has provided only minimal knowledge about the rules of democracy and elements of market economy.

Eastern Belarus is more pro-Russian, pro-soviet and pro-Lukashenko. Inhabitants of that part of the country more definitely opt for integration with Russia. In the Grodno and Brest districts in the western part of the country, where a large part of the Belarusian citizens live from cross-border trade with Poland, the news about prospects for the introduction of visas and restrictions of the movement of persons are received with concern. In the western part of the republic two channels of Polish public television are received, which provide information about Poland, oriented toward the adaptation of West-European arrangements. The wish of the citizens of Belarus to maintain open borders with Poland is visible, as providing a window to another world, perhaps not as fully understandable as that from the post-soviet zone, but appealing by the prospects of welfare and freedom.

2. Politics

Belarus is a country with an authoritarian regime based on fragile foundations. Its functioning depends exclusively on the rule by the charismatic President Alexander Lukashenko, who using the prerogatives granted by the constitution amended on his own initiative, makes the most important decisions both in the sphere of internal and foreign policy. It may be anticipated with a high degree of probability that a possible change of the person holding the office of the president would inevitably lead to the fall of the system constructed by Lukashenko.

The functioning of Lukashenko's regime and the effective management of the country from the point of view of his interests is possible thanks to the existence of a centralised structure of state administration, which faithfully enacts the president's decisions. This centralised system of government has proved itself very well in the course of the elections and referenda conducted this far, effectively assuring the victories of the president and his political grouping. But the subservience of the government administration officials to the president does not result from their personal devotion, nor from any ideological backing of his policy. It is rather the result of plain conformism and fear of losing their jobs in the event of the fall of his rule. One might risk the stipulation that, for the time being, the bureaucracy unfavourably disposed to Lukashenko is short of an impulse to rebel against its patron. Under certain circumstances, however, the factor acting in favour of the president today – conformism and the lack of ideological orientation of the bureaucracy – could swiftly turn into the Achilles heel of his regime. At least some of today's allies of Lukashenko would be inclined to desert his camp, if a candidate would emerge in Belarus, who would enjoy sufficiently strong popular support to have a chance stage an equal challenge to Lukashenko in the struggle for the presidency. Although Lukashenko still continues to lead in popularity ratings, the support for him is systematically falling, whereas the popularity of the opposition politicians is rising, even if only slightly. If free and democratic elections would take place in Belarus, therefore, the re-election of Lukashenko could not any longer be taken for granted, the way it has been the case until now.

The attitude of the Belarusian bureaucracy toward Lukashenko depends, above all, on the position adopted by Russia. The bureaucracy fails to trust in its own strength and capacity to act politically on its own account. Moreover, it shares the belief prevailing in Belarus that the key to the future destiny of Lukashenko's regime is in Moscow. Therefore, even that part of the bureaucracy which is dissatisfied with Lukashenko's rule awaits for a clear signal from the Kremlin. This is not to say that the bureaucracy of Belarus perceives its own interests as being fully identical with the interests of Russia. This indicated by the fact, for example, that many former officials of the President (including some of the current candidates to run for the presidential office) accuse Lukashenko of conducting a pro-Russian policy to the detriment of the interests of Belarus (i.e. the sale to Russians of Belarusian state property at discount prices in exchange for support in the elections).

The Belarusian bureaucracy is horrified by the fact of being replaced by Russians in the administration, special security forces, command positions in the army and the Belarusian national assets being taken over by banks and firms from the Russian Federation. The fear of the threat of becoming politically and professionally marginalized, however, paralyses the Belarusian elites in terms of any possibility of staging any active counteraction to challenge the pressure from the Russians.

The support from Moscow is of key significance for Lukashenko today. The price for such backing consists of his increasing subservience to Russia. Moscow, in turn, exploits Lukashenko's insecurity prior to the elections, and tries to force concessions from him concerning such matters, which it deems significant. The most clear-cut example of that was the signing at the end of last year of the agreement on the introduction of a common currency and Minsk's resignation from staging any resistance to the Russian initiative to establish a joint issuing centre in Moscow. In practical terms this implies the loss by Belarus of one of the attributes of its sovereignty.

Moscow's support for Lukashenko has particular weight also because it has so far provided him with a sufficient external shield. Russia, as one of the few countries that recognise fully Lukashenko's regime and plays the role of its protector and "advocate" on the international scene, contributes in this manner to its survival. The strategy of western countries and international organisations applied hitherto, based on the assumption that the liberalisation of Lukashenko's regime might possibly be "arranged" through the intermediation of Moscow, has been a fiasco. Moreover, that strategy only confirms the belief in Russia and amongst the Belarusian public opinion that the destiny of Belarus continues to be settled above all in Moscow. The isolation of the Belarusian authorities by the West aggravates the complex of the Belarusian bureaucracy with respect to its "elder brother" from the East and paralyses the capacity for any action whatsoever being taken on its part against Lukashenko. In the meantime, Russia, contrary to the hopes of the western coun-

tries, does not raise any postulates to the president of Belarus concerning any liberalisation of his rule, including the carrying out of free and democratic elections. It is very probable that the Kremlin, realising its policy of incorporation of Belarus, will be inclined to recognise the results of the presidential election favourable for Lukashenko, even if they will be conducted under conditions not providing the electorate with any authentic freedom of choice, or event might be outright falsified. Lukashenko, in turn, feeling the sort of consent from Moscow for illegal actions and seeking at any price to keep the power over the country, will not take the risk of conducting the elections in accordance with the standards adopted by democratic countries. This is indicated by the course of the electoral campaign until now.

The Belarusian opposition, eliminated after the constitutional referendum of 1996 from the official structures of the state and pushed out to the margins of political life, does not in fact have any ability to exert any influence upon Lukashenko's regime. Even those few concessions, which the Belarusian authorities have granted it, were above all the result of the pressure of international public opinion. The monopoly of the state over the electronic media restricts the field of activity of the opposition circles to the anti-presidential demonstrations, which it organises. Although these circles enjoy in consequence little social backing, it is thanks to their activity that the international community is informed about the cases of violation of the law and suppression of civil liberties in Belarus. In spite of the fact that the democratic circles are generally perceived as weak, they still represent the most active part of Belarusian society. It is hard to imagine today that they might accept the actual take over of their country by the stronger neighbour. It may be supposed that this circumstance is a significant factor, which partly slows down the imperial plans of Moscow with regards to Belarus.

An important base of the opposition – being a characteristic feature of Belarus on the area of the CIS – is the strongly developed network of non-governmental organisations, which provide a haven for also for many opposition politicians. A consequence of the policy of Belarusian authorities, guarding the monopoly over all the spheres of public life and destroying any manifestations of independent thought, is the opposition and immersion in politics of the Belarusian "non-governmental sector". Differently than in the case of political parties in opposition, whose activities are above all focused at the capital city of Minsk, non-governmental organisations cover by their activities also the provincial parts of the country. They favour the development of the outlines of civil society independent from the structures of the state. This allows us to think that the processes of formation of the Belarusian society and the Belarusian nation will continue, in spite of the authoritarian and nationally indifferent regime.

It is worth underlining the mood with respect to the EU that prevail among the political elite in opposition, and even among parts of the present executive organs. For them the European Union is a symbol of welfare. It is also important how the member countries of the Union are perceived in the capacity of being the countries where the law is indeed respected.

II. Recommendations

The EU and its candidate countries ought to be aware of the fact that their actions oriented at Belarus might not bring the intended results in any short time. It is rather necessary to be prepared for long-term activities, and not to be discouraged by the lack of immediate spectacular effects. But sudden political changes in Belarus cannot be excluded, which could enable the establishment by the EU of real contacts with that country. Therefore, it is already now the time to work out a consistent policy with regards to Belarus, in order not to be surprised by the possible course of events.

1. New EU Policy concerning Belarus

On the part of the EU it would be very important to treat Belarus as a true subject in the foreign policy of the Union. The relations with Belarus cannot be maintained in the context of relations of the EU with Russia. Belarus should become a part of new eastern policy of the EU recognising the diversity of the areas in its direct neighbourhood to the East. The way of thinking about Belarus as part of the Russian sphere of influence, which is present in some of the EU member countries, is unacceptable. An example can be provided in the joint analysis of the planning departments of the ministries of foreign affairs of Germany and France. It explicitly mentions Moscow as the natural centre of gravity for the CIS countries and negates the possibility of future entry to the EU of Belarus, among other countries.

Based on the assumption that Belarus is a distinct subject for the foreign policy of the Union, Brussels ought to influence the situation in that country not via Moscow, but through direct diplomatic activities in Minsk. In talks conducted with Russia the EU should clearly stress that the undemocratic regime of Lukashenko should not be supported. The issue of the support of that regime by Russian authorities is a similar problem for the future of the relations between the EU and Russia, as was recently the issue of Russian support for the regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

The EU should officially declare that it does not exclude the membership of Belarus in the Union in the future. One of the main assumptions of the indicated new eastern policy of the EU, in which Belarus would also have a place, would consist of supporting the pro-European actions of the government of that country. The condition for future inclusion of Belarus among the group of candidates would consist of the will to join the EU expressed by a democratically elected government of Belarus and the acceptance by them of the necessity to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria. Judging by the experience so far, it is difficult to imagine that Lukashenko could possibly meet that condition. This postulate is therefore rather addressed to a subsequent governing group in Belarus.

The presentation by the EU of a European prospect for Belarus would challenge the stereotype that „nobody wants us in Europe", which is widespread in Belarus also among members of the political elite.

Already now the Union should prepare a programme of tangible aid (e.g. facilitation of access for Belarusian goods to the EU market) in the event of positive changes in that country. In a certain sense it would be a repetition of the Serb scenario.

In the opinion-forming circles of the countries of the present European Union one might encounter the concern that pro-European actions with regard to Belarus might be received by Moscow as being an anti-Russian policy. Most of the Russian political elites perceive Belarus either as a part of Russia, or as a country which belongs to the Russian sphere of influence in a natural way. Such an attitude is unfavourable from the EU point of view, as it is a manifestation of the imperial way of thinking of the Russian elite, in the face of which it is difficult to imagine good EU-Russian relations. A chance of at least partial change of

the existing unfavourable way of thinking of the Russian political elite could consist of the convincing it that only close cooperation with the Union of such countries as Belarus, and also Russia itself, might lead to the improvement of the economic condition of the post-soviet area.

2. Counteracting against Isolation

Enormous significance for the shaping of social attitudes in Belarus, favourable from the point of view of the EU, is attached to the issue of free travel of the inhabitants of that country to the Union. It is therefore necessary to introduce maximum facilitation for the citizens of Belarus in their travels to the EU in the framework of the Schengen acquis. It will become particularly important especially after the entry to the Union of the direct neighbours of Belarus – Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In the future, as close as possible, the EU should consider the possibility of deleting Belarus from the black list of the countries whose citizens are required to possess visas to enter the territory of the Union.

For Belarusians especially important are the contacts with those of its neighbours, who will become members of the Union. Visits in Latvia, Lithuania and in Poland help the Belarusians to be convinced by experience of the advantages that stem from European integration.

In order to prevent the isolation of Belarus it is worthwhile to invest in the growth of the pro-European elite. Especially the scholarship programmes for youth are important. Owing to the close proximity of the languages, a large part of these programmes could be realised in Poland. The education of youth close to Belarus offers greater guarantees that their large part will not lose touch with their fatherland and will return to it. In the case of travels to a greater distance, as practical experience seems to indicate, many people still wish to remain in countries distant from Belarus, and at the same time they lose contact with it.

The knowledge of what the EU is about is far from satisfactory in Belarus. Therefore, an information campaign about the Union ought to be conducted. It would be worthwhile, for example, to organise European days in Minsk and in other towns of Belarus. A more active role in promoting the EU in Belarus could be played by the embassies of the member countries.

The EU should not avoid dialogue with Belarus on a lower level. Contacts with the Belarusian bureaucracy, which presently supports Lukashenko's regime, but in the future might turn in favour of a different ruling group, could be of key significance for the future relations between the EU and Belarus. Many initiatives approved at the highest levels can surely be effectively blocked by the all-embracing local bureaucracy.

3. Cooperation with the Non-Governmental Sector and the Trade Unions

Under the conditions of limited contacts on the state level with Belarus, a special place should be given to activities undertaken in concert with the Belarusian non-government sector and with the trade unions. Contacts with non-governmental organisations from EU and candidate countries could allow to overcome the increasing psychosis of isolation and hostility toward aliens, on which the current undemocratic regime is based.

No regulations are able to reduce the growing social activities in Belarus. Government decrees restricting the manifestations of social initiative and the lack of support for activities of that kind might prevent the direct cooperation between the EU countries and Belarusian organisations. They cannot, however, forbid the citizens of these countries and the non-governmental organisations represented by them from delivering incidental humanitarian aid and the transfer of knowledge about the different spheres of life.

The development of a civil society, which would act as an active subject in internal politics and not just as an object of manipulation for the authorities, is the only means for changing the social, political and economic situation in that country, and of assuring its further development. It is necessary to transfer the experience and knowledge needed for the construction of civil society. It is also necessary to assure close cooperation between non-governmental organisations from EU countries and non-governmental organisations from the candidate countries, especially Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, concerning projects addressing Belarus. In the case projects of non-governmental organisations from member countries with the participation of Belarusian partners, it would be worthwhile to provide easier access to funds from the Union.

The development of activities of the local communities could stimulate the process of developing the civil society in Belarus. Therefore, the implementation of many international projects locally could play a significant role in shaping the social attitudes in Belarus, slowing down the increasing impoverishment of Belarusian society and the overcoming of the isolation, which breeds xenophobia.

An important postulate is also for the EU to promote the cooperation of trade unions from its member and candidate countries with shop-floor activists of various trade union organisations in Belarus. In order to popularise democratic attitudes in Belarusian society it of enormous relevance to reach out to the working class communities.

4. Support for Independent Media

The undemocratic regime in Belarus relies on the isolation of the country and limitation of citizens' access to information. Television stations, with the exception of Russian channels, are controlled by the regime. There is still a lack of independent domestic electronic media. The existence in Belarus of two commercial FM broadcasting stations also fails to give access to uncensored information.

Therefore, the independent press functioning in Belarus emerges to assume a particularly vital role. Available research indicates that depending on the title, a single copy of an independent newspaper in Belarus is read by 5 to 10 people. Therefore, although the print runs of independent press titles total some 250 thousand copies, their effective circulation and impact is in reality much more widespread. Nevertheless, the half-million circulation of the major official newspaper "Sovetskaya Belarusya" together with dozens of other official titles reflects the practical monopolisation of the public communications media by the regime. Therefore, support for the free press, as the only means to provide society with access to alternative information is an indispensable factor in the effort to develop the civil society in Belarus.

Source: *Stefan Batory Foundation*
(http://www.batory.org.pl)

ECONOMY

Lagging Growth Could Cause Fiscal Difficulties In Belarus

Slower than anticipated growth and deteriorating performance of the industrial sector is having on impact on Belarus' fiscal situation. GDP increased just 3.0 percent in the first six months of the year, compared with 6.0 percent growth in full year 2000. Industrial output in the first half of 2001 was 4.1 percent higher than in the same period last year, a considerable slackening of growth given the 8.3 percent achieved for all of 2000. The slowdown in the Russian economy this year is the major factor in the deceleration of growth in Belarus.

The lower-than-expected rate of GDP growth is having a negative effect on Belarus' fiscal situation. Consolidated state budget revenues amounted to 2,513.9 billion roubles in the first six months of 2001, representing a shortfall of 1 percent from the target in the annual budget document. The central government budget experienced a revenue shortfall of 2.8 percent below target. The State Tax Committee blamed the shortfall on increases in the share of enterprises operating at a loss, a lower than anticipated increase in aggregate output and VAT exemptions provided to enterprises. State-owned enterprise losses were boosted as output rates declined less than sales, while stocks of finished goods at enterprises rose to 67.9 percent of the average monthly level of output. The share of enterprises operating at a loss rose from 10.7 percent in early 2001 to 14.3 percent at the beginning of July. Meanwhile, exemptions from VAT in the first six months of 2001 amounted to a loss in revenue of 86.9 billion roubles. In addition, the government provided 21.5 billion roubles in tax credits and 6.1 billion roubles in tax deferments. Arrears to the state budget accumulated by enterprises amounted to 100 billion roubles after just the first four months of this year, including the value of deferments and other official concessions (BelaPAN News Agency, July 24).

Enterprise losses have caused wage arrears to grow as well, providing another area for interference by the presidential administration. At the end of July, noting that arrears to workers had exceeded 1 billion roubles, Lukashenka ordered that all wages through June be paid by August 3. In the past, politically motivated campaigns to quickly clear up arrears in payments by enterprises have been facilitated by government pressure on commercial banks to direct new credits on soft terms to the financially troubled enterprises. Under the monitoring arrangement with the IMF for April-October 2001, the government and the National Bank have agreed to abandon such practices. Nevertheless, already in April the IMF team had complained of government pressure on commercial banks to lend to agricultural enterprises. Such lending has served as a major source of inflationary pressure in Belarus in the past.

The target for the consolidated budget deficit in 2001 is 218 billion roubles, or 1.4 percent of the official forecast for GDP. That level is consistent with external financing anticipated to be made available later in the year. The Finance Ministry also has in place a set of contingency measures amounting to 0.7 percent of GDP if external financing is not forthcoming. The government has pledged to the IMF to keep the deficit at the level of financing actually available. In the interest of trimming financing requirements, the government will phase in wage hikes in the budgetary sector in 2001, synchronizing these increases with cutbacks in budgetary subsidies to households, including those for transport, housing and utilities, through increases in applicable tariffs. Even after an 80-percent hike in utility rates this spring, households were paying only some 25 percent of the cost of heating and hot water. The Minister of Housing and Municipal Services, Alyaksandr Mikolta maintains, however, that additional rate hikes are not planned for the near future. When asked if this decision had been coordinated with the IMF, Mikolta said that he had no dealings with the IMF, adding that his ministry answers to the president (BelaPAN News Agency, June 6).

Source: *Monitor, August 10, 2001*

BELARUSIAN CULTURE

Students Seek Revival of Language, National Consciousness

By Jeremy Bransten

There was a time when no one questioned the status of Belarusian and its linguistic antecedent, Ruthenian. In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — one of Europe's most influential regional powers from the 14th to the 17th century — most inhabitants spoke Ruthenian. The language that was to later develop into modern Belarusian was used in the chancery.

Documents of historical significance, including the 1588 Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, medieval Europe's most thorough legal code since Roman times, were written in Ruthenian. But since those glory days, the language has been in decline, a victim of neglect and assimilation policies by rulers who sought to Polonize or Russify parts of the country.

In Soviet times, Russification policies continued, and for the past seven years, under the rule of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, the same attitudes have prevailed. Aksyuta Kashkevich, a university student in Minsk, is press secretary for the Union of Belarusian Students. She recalls her high school days: "In school, they taught us some Belarusian, but it was awful. All the time they inculcated the idea that Belarusian is a peasant language and only uneducated people speak it."

Kashkevich says her history studies led her to the opposite conclusion, spurring her to study Belarusian more thoroughly. Initially, she says, she did not find much understanding. "I tried to speak to people in Belarusian, but I wasn't very successful. There was no support — there was nowhere where could you speak Belarusian all the time. It was only when I met people from the Union of Belarusian Students, when I discovered that there were people who spoke all the time in Belarusian and who weren't afraid to do so, that I came here," she said.

Kashkevich says mastering Belarusian took her several years of effort. But now, she speaks it full-time. "Of course, at the beginning it was tough, because you're used to speaking Russian all the time and Russian words would slip in all the time. Now it's the opposite: when I speak Russian, Belarusian words mix in. Because I practically no longer use Russian — only when people don't understand me," Kashkevich said.

Kashkevich says her Russian-speaking parents still don't express much understanding -- even though her father is capable of speaking Belarusian: "To this day, my mother reproaches me. She says: 'We taught you to speak Russian and now you're distancing yourself from us and speaking Belarusian.' She laughs and makes fun of me when I use words that aren't similar to Russian words. They are Belarusian words — but old. Few people know them. My father can speak Belarusian, but he doesn't always try. But my younger brother is also trying to speak Belarusian."

How representative is Kashkevich of her fellow-citizens and her age group? Is she part of a trend or just a nationalist exception? Professor Aleh Manayeu, head of Belarus's leading independent think tank, the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Research (NISEPI), has researched the issue.

Manayeu says that in terms of language use, Belarusian national identity remains dormant for the majority of the population: "National identity in Belarus is far more weakly expressed than in any of the other post-Soviet countries — any — even in Moldova or Central Asia, not to mention Russia and the Baltic states."

Manayeu's surveys indicate less than 5 percent of the population use only Belarusian in their professional and personal lives. But a Western diplomat posted in Minsk who has traveled extensively throughout the country tells RFE/RL that statistics can be misleading. He says most people use Russian frequently because there is no other choice, especially in official contexts. All administrative documents are printed in Russian, most schooling is conducted in Russian, and the language is promoted as the most convenient medium of exchange. But, the diplomat says, especially in rural areas, Belarusian remains alive and in use.

The revival of Belarusian among some of the nation's young people, promoted by organizations such as the Union of Belarusian Students, is a newer phenomenon but one that appears to be growing —despite the odds. Another student, Aksana, discussed her feelings while chatting with a friend in front of her university:

"In general, I am trying to resuscitate this Belarusian identity in myself and my family, especially in my younger sister. It's very hard, because there are no conditions for developing our Belarusian identity. Just imagine, there is almost no subject taught in Belarusian at the university. It's very hard to find Belarusian literature in bookstores. Most of the books are in Russian. It's very hard to get quality language education in Belarusian. It's very hard."

Plans by several professors to set up a national university where courses would be taught in Belarusian have been blocked by government authorities for several years.

In some respects, the Western diplomat says, the situation in today's Belarus can be compared to that in Central Europe 150 years ago, when national revival movements formed in several states dominated by larger empires.

He recalls that in countries like today's Czech Republic, which lived through an analogous period of Germanization, it took the work of a handful of determined intellectuals to gradually revive the use of Czech as a literary language and preferred means of communication in state institutions. They too were swimming against the current. But today, the diplomat notes, "no one questions the fact that one of the world's leading playwrights and statesmen — Vaclav Havel—writes in Czech and not in German."

Even in eastern Belarus, in the heavily Russified Mahileu region, where few people speak Belarusian, some people today will tell you they are different from Russians and do not consider themselves part of the same nation. Uladzimir Haydukou, who heads the Mahileu branch of the opposition United Civic Party, sums up the general feeling:

"I consider myself a European. I am closer to Europe. We try to attune our youth to the fact that they are Europeans and don't belong to some sort of Eastern culture. We are at the center of Europe, after all. We must consider ourselves Europeans and we must not consider ourselves Russians. Russia is huge -- it has Eastern and Western influences all mixed up. But we are closer to Europe and have to educate people to this fact -- that they are Europeans."

Regardless of the language they speak, Haydukou says, Belarus's people must come to see themselves as citizens of their own state and not as provincials in a larger empire.

Jeremy Branstan is a RFE/RL correspondent.

Source: *RFE/RL Poland, Belarus and Ukraine Report, July 10, 2001.*

BELARUSIANS ABROAD

BNR Rada Letter of Condolences to President Bush

Following is the text of the letter of condolences sent President George W. Bush by Ms. Ivonka Survilla, president of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile, on the occasion of the terrorist attack on the United States.

Dear Mr. President,

On this tragic day for the people of the whole free world, who have witnessed the deadliest act of terrorism in the history of mankind on the soil of the United States, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to you, Mr. President, and to the people of the United States.

A great number of the members of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile are American citizens. On their behalf, and on behalf of the people of Belarus, who are themselves subjected at this time to an inhuman and cruel regime, I would also like to thank you for the support you have expressed a few days ago, on the eve of the rigged presidential elections in Belarus, to those of us who try to return democracy and freedom to our homeland.

We are particularly thankful to you for understanding that Aleksandar Lukashenka and his regime are in no way representative of the people of Belarus. If they were to be recognized as the legitimate government of Belarus, it would be the end of Belarus. The Union treaty with Russia, which Mr. Lukashenka signed while he was no longer the legitimate president of the country, would be rapidly implemented and make the Republic of Belarus another Russian province. You may know that Russia has been the first foreign power who has congratulated Mr. Lukashenka on his "victory," and the Russian Embassy in Minsk had worked nonstop to make sure that this victory would be achieved. Russia, who understands well the important strategic location of Belarus, has been the only member of the OSCE who has supported him (and used him) during his seven year term as President of Belarus.

At this time, only Western democracies can save Belarus. Please do not let an evil dictator and his Eastern friends eliminate a thousand years old nation from the map of the world. Do not let our beautiful homeland join the club of the rogue states of the world.

Sincerely yours,
(signed) Ivonka J. Survilla
President Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile
Ottawa, Canada
12 September 2001

The Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library In London Is Thirty Years Old

By Fr. Alexander Nadson, Librarian

Thirty years ago, On 15 May 1971, the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library in London was officially opened by professor Robert Auty from Oxford and blessed by archbishop Domenico Enrici, Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain.

The idea of the library was born almost by chance on an autumn day of 1969 in London among the three Belarusian Catholic priests. During the after-lunch recreation one of them, Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich (1914-1981), Apostolic Visitor for Belarusian Catholics of Byzantine Rite, suddenly said: "Let's found a library." His proposal was received enthusiastically by two others, Father Leo Haroshka (1911-1977) and the present writer. It was unanimously decided that the Library should bear the name of Francis Skaryna (c.1485-1540), the first Belarusian printer and translator of the Bible.

The importance of a Belarusian library was understood by Belarusian communities abroad. From their experience they knew how little was known in the West about their country which was at that time part of the Soviet Union Their generous support made it possible for Bishop Sipovich's idea to become reality sooner than originally planned. Another group interested in the Belarusian library were Western Slavic scholars who had difficulty finding material about Belarus.

The initial holdings of the library were books from the private collections of Bishop Sipovich and Father Haroshka, who was at that time Rector of the Belarusian Catholic mission in England. Among the most precious early gifts was a copy of the *Lithuanian Statute* of 1588, a code of civil and criminal law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, of which Belarus formed a part. It as printed in Belarusian which was the official language of that state.

At the present moment the Library's holdings consist of some 25,000 titles in Belarusian and other languages, all dealing with Belarus, hundreds of periodicals, past and present, and an extensive collection of manuscripts and archive material. The most treasured possession, alongside with the *Lithuanian Statute*, are five books of Francis Skaryna's Bible, printed in 1517-18. There are rare first editions of works of many Belarusian writers, as well as some manuscripts, including that of the famous poem *Kurhan* (The grave mound) by arguably the greatest Belarusian national poet Janka Kupala (1882-1942). Other manuscripts include the 17th century text of Pontifical Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom with a parallel Latin translation, and the 18th century Tartar *Tefsir*, or Koran with interlinear translation into Polish and Belarusian, written in Arabic script.

Attached to the Library is a museum, small in size but rich in relics of Belarusian history from the 15th century onwards.

Over one thousand scholars from Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, USA, Canada, Australia, Israel, Japan and, of course, Belarus made use of the Library's facilities for study and research. Among its distinguished visitors there have been several Belarusian writers, poets and artists. Meetings, lectures, art exhibitions etc. are held there on regular basis. During the last twenty years there were eight major international conferences on various Belarusian topics.

The Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library is an independent institution and is not in receipt of any grant or subsidy from public funds. Its existence has been made possible thanks to the generosity and understanding of its numerous friends and wellwishers. Let us hope that this generosity and understanding will continue in the new millennium in order to enable the Library to fulfill its role to be the window of Belarusian culture in the West.

The Library is open to all interested in Belarus, its people, history and culture. Admission is free on previous appointment with the librarian.

Address: The Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library
37 Holden Road, London N12 8HS.
Nearest Underground station: Woodside Park (northern Line).
Telephone/fax: 020-8445 5358.
Internet: http://skaryna.cjb.net
E-mail: belarusianlibraryinlondon@yahoo.com

MEDIA WATCH

PRESS REVIEW

In the two months leading up to the September 9 election, there was unprecedented coverage of Belarus in the print media. Unfortunately, all of this reporting—except for news about the activities of "Zubr" and other pro-freedom and democracy groups and individuals—was negative and foreboding. In the wake of the elections, there were signs that perhaps we would see some follow-up coverage of events and conditions in Belarus along with new policy initiatives and approaches by the West towards Belarus.

Certainly, there appeared language from many quarters indicating the recognition of a need to do something about the "Last Dictatorship in Europe." Then, September 11 happened. Now the eyes of the world are for the most part focused elsewhere and the level of coverage of Belarus has returned to where it has mostly been in these first ten years of the restoration of independence. But the need for coverage and action is more critical now that Lukashenka has extended his reign and appears more open about taking his revenge against those who dared to oppose him.

Who is Ivonka Survilla? (*The Citizens Weekly*, "Madame President — Belarus' president - in - exile, Joanna Survilla, is fighting repression in her own country from the front lines — in Hull," July 29, 2001) The article is about Ms. Survilla's biographical journey from the time of her childhood in western Belarus (then occupied by Poland), in Soviet Belarus (after western Belarus was annexed by the So-

viet Union), under the German occupation (1941 to 1944), followed by her family's flight to Western Europe in 1945.

Later her family moved to France, where she graduated from the Sorbonne with a advanced degree in arts and married a Belarusian when she was 23. The couple spent ten years in Madrid, making short-wave broadcasts that were transmitted to Belarus. In 1969 they moved to Canada where she worked as a translator in the federal public service. After the death of her husband, she has retired. She speaks Belarusian, English, French, German and Spanish. In her civic activities, she helped found the Canadian Relief Fund for Victims of Chernobyl in Belarus of which she is president. Under the fund's sponsorship, since 1991, thousands of ill children from Belarus spent summers with Canadian families. In 1997 she was elected president of the Rada (Council) of the Belarusian Democratic Republic-in Exile. The original Rada was constituted in the 1918, the year that the Belarusian Democratic Republic declared its independence. She is 65, has two daughters and lives in Hull, Canada.

KGB Investigators Followed Dangerous Leads (*The Washington Post*, "Flight From a Death Squad in Belarus," July 1, 2001) -- The KGB investigators, Petrushkevich and Sluchek, uncover evidence and common patterns in the disappearances of Zavadsky and others and establish connections to numerous figures within the Belarusian government. In the end Lukashenka comes to the rescue — of the bad guys.

Titenkov Weighs In Against Old Boss But Putin's Stance Effects Balance (*The Washington Post*, "Murders and Elections," July 15, 2001) --The article references statements by Lukashenka's former alleged 'bag man' and proxy landlord that bolster claims of the existence of state-sponsored hit squads. The effects of such reports on potential political rivals is clear — witness the aborted presidential campaign of Ms. Masherova. The article points out: "Mr. Putin, however has quietly tolerated Mr. Lukashenko's brutality..." but, is maintaining a safe political distance. It is suggested that perhaps, "Mr. Putin agrees with Mr. Lukashenko's goals, and is untroubled by his means of pursuing them."

Architect of Murders (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Former Belarusan Legal Investigators Say Death Squad Killed Critics of Regime," July 24, 2001) — This is an excellent overview of the more prominent cases of disappearance in Belarus over the last 5 years. Viktor Sheyman is shown as the suspected mastermind of drastic measures for opposition control.

Milosevic Was a Shrinking Violet (*BBC*, "Belarus Leader Accuses OSCE," August 1, 2001) — The OSCE encounters tough rhetoric, accusations and obstructive tactics from Lukashenka, and hears his promise to show the world what he thinks Milosevic should have done when the going got tough.

Dark Age To Continue (*U. S. News & World Report*, "A Tyrant the World Ignores — In Belarus, Lukashenko Rules by Decree, Whim, Tantrum, and — Maybe — Murder," August 6, 2001) — The article paints a woeful picture of every aspect of life and prospects in Belarus under Lukashenka's shadow. On the upcoming presidential elections and the structure of the electoral system Aleksander Feduta is quoted: "It's the house that Lukashenko built." As far as what will happen during the campaign and after the perceived inevitable reelection of Lukashenko, journalist Zhanna Litvina is quoted: "...he will see everyone who speaks against him....and then he is going to take his revenge on each of us."

Playing Field for Elections Established by Lukashenka--Takes Into Account Lessons of Events in Yugoslavia and Gives Youths Lesson in Luka-Civics (*The Wall Street Journal* - European Edition, "Rising Sun," August 6, 2001) — By bluster, physical intimidation and property seizures, president sets out to head off Yugoslavia scenario and works to create the 'right' atmosphere for the upcoming elections. Young pro-freedom activists receive unwanted boosts from police. The "Zubr" movement is cited.

Talk of Belarusian Death Squads Intensifies- (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, "Belarusian Fugitives Charge President Lukashenko With Orchestrating Abductions and Slaughter of His Regime's Opponents," August 6, 2001) — The article points out how the accusations of death squads are playing with US officialdom.

Lukashenka Singing: "Zippity Doo Da..."(*The Financial Times*, "Dissenting Voice May Be Drowned Out in Belarus: Autocratic Leader is Likely to Head Off Challenge in Race to Be President," August 10, 2001) — The article mentions the current living conditions and attitudes in Belarus and how they play into Lukashenka's plans to remain in power.

Indeed, Belarusians Do Deserve Better (*The Washington Post*, "Europe's Last Dictator Feels the Heat," August 15, 2001) — This substantial article provides a brief and concise historical background on Belarus, the rise of Lukashenka, and several vignettes that help define the current situation in Belarus. The plight of the opposition is covered well. The article is successful in helping the reader acquire some "feel" for what it is like to be in Belarus now. A pensioner was interviewed and relates that "He's (Lukashenka is) honest. He's not selling out Belarus. He tries to make sure everything belongs to the people....You can feel that he cares." The role of President Putin and the Russian media is touched upon.

Through The Eyes of Western Diplomats (*The Washington Times*, "Europe's Last Dictator," August 23, 2001) — Kenneth L. Adelman, Max Kampelmann and Mark Palmer- three persons seasoned in European history and familiar with the European perspective, provide insight into the situation in Belarus.

No News Would be Good News — For Lukashenka (*The New York Times*, "Beleaguered Belarus Leader Steps Up Press Crackdown," August 28, 2001) -- This article provides a good focus and detail on the state of the media in Belarus with particular attention to case of the disappearance of Gonchar and Krasovsky. Mention is made of recent visa denials and the expulsion of an American representative of the A.F.L. - C. I. O., Robert Fielding.

Minsk is Spinning (*The New York Times*, "Belarus Leader Says West Plots Against Him," August 29, 2001) — This article deals largely with the efforts of the regime at bottling-up the stories concerning recent disappearances of opposition figures. The "West" is cited as the source of "provocations", that is, the stories linking the disappearances to the regime.

Europeans Called to Stand Up For Belarus (*The New York Times*, Editorial: "The Bully of Belarus," August 29, 2001) — This editorial cites Belarus' geopolitical importance and the need for the EU, with the backing of Russia and the US, to "...come to the aid of those struggling under Europe's last dictatorship."

Knows His Bananas (*The London Times*, "US Adopts 'Contras Policy' in Communist Belarus," September 3, 2001) — The current US ambassador to Belarus, Michael Kozak, spent a large part of his diplomatic career dealing with issues pertaining to Central America and the Caribbean. The article states that in "an unusual admission" he (Kozak) "said in a letter to a British newspaper that America's objective and to some degree methodology are the same in Belarus as in Nicaragua, where the US backed the Contras against the left-wing Sandinista government..." The article also cites a spokesman for the US embassy who indicated that while the US did provide support to many NGO's, the funding did not go to "political parties".

Kurapaty Revisited (*The Boston Globe*, "Belarus Hard-Liner Hides Stalin's Bloody Traces," September 4, 2001) — The article, by David Filipov, recounts all the details and chronology that every Belarusian patriot knows and what the rest of the world should know about the Soviet NKVD killing grounds at Kurapaty, near Minsk; and how the Lukashenka regime is laboring to rewrite history and place blame for the mass executions on the German Nazis. President Clinton's visit and his placement of a marble monument at the location in 1994 is recounted. The article notes that the monument was subsequently destroyed by vandals. With regard to the handling of the Kurapaty issue and the current regime's ideology, Stanislau Shushkevich is quoted: "The policies of Belarus are based on communist principles...But the fact that the communist ideology is criminal, the regime here doesn't talk about that...It is trying to whitewash the ideology."

Maybe If We Cooperate...(*The Wall Street Journal*, "As Belarus Election Looms, U.S. and Europe Take Different Approaches Towards Its Autocratic Leader," September 7, 2001) — The article points out that the US and European communities have different approaches to Belarus, which it refers to as a "neglected swathe of Europe"; but that Lukashenka continues on his own unwavering course. Comparisons are made to Yugoslavia and Mr. Milosevic. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell is quoted as describing Belarus as "'the lone outlaw in Europe.'"

Diagnosis: An Ulcer (*The Economist*, "A rotten state", September 8, 2001) -- This is the lead article in the "Europe" section of the September 8 issue of the magazine. The sub-heading of the article is: "President Alexander Lukashenka...looks set to win a rigged election. Bad news for everyone — especially the poor Belarussians." But instead of writing-off hapless Belarus the West needs to pay more attention. The article points out that unless Belarus changes its path dramatically, it will continue to be a source of worry and future problems for the West and for democracy in the center of Europe. It cites the country as worrying the West as: "...a source of arms (for example, upgraded air defence for Saddam Hussein's Iraq), crime (particularly electronic fraud), sex slaves and illegal migrants." Additionally, under Lukashenka's regime government repression and corruption is the modus operandi and the national objective is made to be the recreation of the Soviet Union.

The article further outlines the difficulties faced by Hancaryk's presidential campaign, since the entire playing field is tilted drastically in Lukashenka's favor. As a result, the opposition is subjected to unchecked intimidation, unfair election laws and denial of access to electronic media. The opposition, says the article, did put some hope of impartial treatment and openness of coverage in the main Russian TV channels. However, as stated in the article: "After some opening salvoes, the main Russian channels have all but ignored the election, presumably on the Kremlin's orders. Mr. Goncharik remains virtually unknown; the opposition's evidence of state-sanctioned murder, illegal weapons sales and other dubious dealing has little chance of reaching voters."

After the expected victory by Lukashenka, the article indicates that expulsions from the country, (for starters OSCE representative Hans-Georg Wieck and U.S. Ambassador Michael Kozak), a downgrading of official relations with the West and acts of "revenge" by Lukashenka are possible. But , as the article states: "What Mr. Lukashenka does will depend on Russia, which provides the cheap energy and barter deals that keep Belarus's Soviet-style economy clunking along." The article further states: "In return, Russia gets two useful military bases, plus, potentially, control over the country's main industrial assets when they come to be privatised, as well as clinging embraces from Lukashenka."

Read 'Em and Weep (*Los Angeles Times*, "Belarus' President Holds All the Cards in Iron Fist", September 9, 2001) — This lengthy article by LA Times staff writer John Daniszewski deals mainly with six faces of the ongoing contest for freedom in Belarus. The 'Zubr' (Belarusian for 'Bison') movement is covered in some depth. What motivates the members of Zubr and how they are conducting a running battle with the ruling power is the main feature of the article. One Zubr identified only as "Vlad" offered this view: "The people who support the regime are fighting only for their positions...But we are fighting for our country, our freedom and our future.".

Next, there is some discussion on the monitoring of the election. Mechislav Grib, who is reported as heading one of the monitoring efforts is quoted: "We have been branded CIA agents. We get more coverage than Lukashenko's rivals." Preelection polling results and the difficulties imposed upon the Hancharyk campaign are mentioned.

An historical perspective is used to illustrate the geopolitical position of Belarus today which places the nation in the middle of an East-West tug-of-war. Several quotes are offered in the article from famed Belarusian author Vasil Bykov including: "Everything that has been happening under Lukashenko is nothing but the implementation of Russia's overt and secret imperial plans and desires." And finally, in case the reader begins harboring any hopes for freedom and democracy in Belarus, the author closes with a few paragraphs about the regime's steadfast base of support, which is as usual, summarized through a recitation of admiration and gratitude for Lukashenka, from a 'typical' veteran-pensioner.

Belarus — Worth the Effort (*The Washington Post*, September 9, 2001) — In this editorial in which Lukashenka is referred to as "a murderous strongman who rules 10 million people near the center of Europe", a proactive stance by the US vis-a-vis Belarus is advocated. The editorial closes with: "President Bush hasn't hesitated to assert what he sees as U.S. interests in Europe when it comes to global warming or missile defense. Surely he can do it when the stakes are freeing the continent from its last dictatorship."

Situation Normal...(*The New York Times*, "Belarus Leader Claims Big Election Victory, but Many Doubt It," September 10, 2001) —This substantial article cites numerous reports of suspicious incidents and irregularities in the election.

Reactions Coming In...(*The New York Times*, "Stalinist's Disputed Victory in Belarus Is Denounced," September 11, 2001) -- The article starts by noting that the results of the election have been questioned by almost everyone except Russia. A systematic disruption of election monitoring ac-

tivities by observers and opposition forces and communications systems in the country is reported. Lukashenka is reported in the article to have said that Hans-Georg Wieck, head of the OSCE's mission in Minsk ".. would be expelled from Belarus for espionage if he does not leave voluntarily." Lukashenka also reportedly stated that ' "Our elections don't need the recognition of anybody."'

Now What? (*The Guardian -- United Kingdom,* "The Bully of Belarus: Russia Must Tell Lukashenko to Shape Up," September 11, 2001) -- In this opinion piece, Belarus is described as out of touch with modern Europe, and the elections are described as "a fix". Nevertheless, the piece calls for the US and EU to "review their policy of ostracism, as urged by the OSCE mission." Because, "It clearly has not worked..."

Black Hole of Europe — The following is an editorial which appeared in the Prague newspaper *Lidove Noviny* (*People's News*), September 11, 2001

Editorial by Martin Vanek

By fixing the presidential election the Belarusian dictator usurped power for another five year period. The world expected this outcome; but his impudence surprised everyone. Is this at all possible in today's Europe? Results speak for themselves. For the most part it is because of his Russian conservators that Europe's last political Tyrannosaurus Rex has been granted a reprieve and continues to roam about with hopes of expanding his range and finding mates in the lands to the east.

Western Powers are also at fault. They paid little attention to the developing situation; it seemed that physical liquidation of their own assets in the country, such as their embassies, got their attention faster than the physical liquidation of the regime's opponents.

Czech Republic is not blameless either. It offered Lukashenka sustenance in the form of credits for purchase of Czech grain. Belarus's democratic opposition perceived this action as a knife in their back. Indications are that the grain has been reexported or used for vodka production.

If Europe really wants to get rid of its last dictator, it must resort to tougher measures: severe economic and political sanctions against Belarus, pronounced pressure on Russia and maximal support for the Belarusian democratic opposition.

However this will be much more difficult than in the past — the dictator has firmly stomped out and marked his territory.

Only 'Polite' Plaudits From Russia (*The Christian Science Monitor,* "Belarus Dreams of a Union With a Wary Russia — President Lukashenko's Reelection Sunday Gets a Wan Reaction in Moscow," September 12, 2001) -- The article deals with the future of the Belarus-Russia relationship; and it underscores the current differences in systems and approaches to economic development and governance and how Russians now view Belarus with more caution.

Continuing Reactions to the Election Outcome (*The Wall Street Journal,* "Stolen Elections," September 14, 2001) — Instead of diminishing with time, outrage and protest actions by the opposition continue and may increase over the coming weeks. It is reported that Goncharyk has called for a nationwide strike. The former head of the Belarusian Parliament, Shushkevich while appearing on Moscow's Radio Echo describing Russia's support of Lukashenko as "absolutely inhumane."

The Past is the Key to the Future (*The Economist,* "The nostalgic opposition," September 15, 2001) — In the aftermath of the presidential election the article looks to current realities and reaches back into the 14th century to find answers to what it terms " two depressing questions." The writers ask: "..why do so many Belarussians—perhaps more than half of them — genuinely think that an autocratic regime based on a bullying personality cult is so fine?" And, "...why are the disgruntled rest, who broadly oppose his style of rule, unable to do anything about it?" In colorful and insightful fashion, the article presents some of the historical facts that fuel the aspirations and pride of the oppositionists. But, the article reminds that Belarus's "distant but glorious past" is overshadowed by the Soviet version of history which dominates and stresses "Belarus as a grateful partner of big brotherly Russia." Mention is made in the article of the current and past Polish influence, particularly in northwest Belarus, and of the history surrounding Navahrudak.

NEWS BRIEFS

CHRONICLE of EVENTS

July 18, 2001

TOP BELARUSIAN OFFICIALS IMPLICATED IN KILLING OF OPPOSITION FIGURES...

Uladzimir Hancharyk, the head of the Federation of Trade Unions and one of the contestants in Belarus's presidential race, has made public documents alleging that top Belarusian law-enforcement officials were involved in the killing of prominent opposition figures in 1999 (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 16 July 2001), Belapan and RFE/RL's Belarusian Service reported on 17 July. According to a photocopy of a report allegedly written by the former chief of the police department for criminal investigation, Mikalay Lapatsik, to Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau, former Security Council Secretary Viktar Sheyman ordered an Interior Ministry task force to kill Yury Zakharanka, Viktar Hanchar, and Anatol Krasouski. The three were allegedly killed with shots from a pistol used for executions of death-row prisoners in Belarus. According to another document, former Interior Minister Yury Sivakou authorized task force commander Dzmitry Pavlyuchenka to take the pistol out of the death-row prison on two occasions. Sheyman is now prosecutor-general, while Sivakou serves as deputy head of the presidential administration. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 18, 2001)

WHILE PROSECUTOR-GENERAL'S AIDE SAYS IMPLICATION IS 'ELECTORAL PROVOCATION.'

Alyaksey Taranau, an aide to Prosecutor-General Viktar Sheyman, told a RFE/RL Belarusian Service correspondent on 17 July that the documents publicized by Hancharyk are fabricated. "This is an electoral provocation intended to discredit Belarus's incumbent president," Taranau added. Last week, Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau denied having received the report mentioned by Hancharyk from Lapatsik. Hancharyk's revelations seem to confirm the allegations by two former Belarusian investigators, Dzmitry Petrushkevich and Aleh Sluchak, about the existence of a government-organized "death squad" in Belarus (see "RFE/RL Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine Report," 12 June 2001). (RFE/RL Newsline, July 18, 2001)

July 20, 2001

WIVES OF BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION FIGURES APPEAL FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The wives of Henadz Karpenka, Andrey Klimau, Anatol Krasouski, and Dzmitry Zavadski on 19 July spoke to Belarusian journalists over a video link from Washington, D.C., in an attempt to rally international support and press Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime to reveal the truth about their husbands' fates, AP and Belapan

reported. Karpenka died in a Minsk hospital in April 1999 under unclear circumstances; Klimau has been imprisoned for three years in a case that was widely seen as an act of revenge by Lukashenka on his political opponent; Zavadski went missing in July 2000; Krasouski disappeared in September 1999, together with opposition leader Viktar Hanchar. Lyudmila Karpenka said the four wives are making the appearance together "because in our country nothing can be done alone. We decided that world opinion must pay attention to the political repression that exists in our country." (RFE/RL Newsline, July 20, 2001)

July 20, 2001

BELARUSIAN TRADE UNION LEADER INFORMS PUTIN ABOUT DEATH SQUAD ALLEGATIONS

Uladzimir Hancharyk, the head of the Federation of Trade Unions and one of the contestants in Belarus's presidential race, has sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin with copies of the documents alleging that top Belarusian law-enforcement officials were involved in the killing of prominent opposition figures in 1999 (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 18 July 2001), Belapan reported on 19 July. According to those documents, opposition leaders Yury Zakharanka and Hanchar as well as Hanchar's friend Anatol Krasouski were killed by a death squad organized by President Lukashenka's close associates, Viktar Sheyman and Yury Sivakou. Hancharyk expressed the hope that Putin will use his political clout to establish "the rule of law and civic accord that are so necessary for the holding of truly democratic presidential elections" in Belarus. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 20, 2001)

July 24, 2001

OPPOSITION HOPEFULS UNITE AROUND SINGLE CHALLENGER TO LUKASHENKA

Four politicians supported by the Belarusian opposition -- Mikhail Chyhir, Syamyon Domash, Syarhey Kalyakin, and Pavel Kazlouski -- said on 21 July that they will withdraw from the presidential race and form a united campaign behind Uladzimir Hancharyk, the head of the Trade Union Federation of Belarus, Belapan reported. In this way, the five complied with their earlier pledge to propose a single candidate from a broad coalition of democratic and opposition forces in a bid to oust dictatorial President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. According to Belapan, if the Central Election Commission refuses to register Hancharyk as a presidential candidate, the role of a single democratic candidate will be assumed by Domash. The agency also reported that if Hancharyk wins the September presidential elections, he will call on Domash to form a new government.

"Today's decision has removed a heavy burden from all of us," Stanislau Shushkevich, Belarus's head of state in the early 1990s, commented to Belapan regarding the five's decision to field Hancharyk against Lukashenka. "Now we should unite and work together for the man who has been trusted by the five to be No. 1. I call on all activists of all opposition parties to give up party and personal ambitions and work in team for Uladzimir Ivanavich Hancharyk," Shushkevich added.

Vintsuk Vyachorka, the leader of the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF), said Hancharyk should immediately take steps toward consolidation of opposition political forces in Belarus. "We expect Mr. Hancharyk to make unambiguous statements about his attitude toward Belarus's independence and return to the democratic path of development, the separation of power branches, economic reform, the Belarusian people's national and cultural future. This will determine the degree of the participation of the BNF, the country's largest democratic organization, in the presidential campaign of Uladzimir Hancharyk."

Meanwhile, the Central Election Commission said on 23 July that, according to "preliminary data," only four aspirants out of the 22 who collected signatures — Lukashenka, Hancharyk, Domash, and Syarhey Haydukevich — managed to supply the minimum of 100,000 signatures required for the registration as presidential candidates. (RFE/RL Poland, Belarus and Ukraine Report, July 24, 2001)

July 24, 2001

BELARUSIAN NGO WANTS DISMISSAL OF OFFICIALS OVER DEATH SQUAD ALLEGATIONS

The Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BKhK) has demanded the dismissal of Prosecutor-General Viktar Sheyman, deputy chief of the presidential administration Yury Sivakou, and Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau, Belapan reported on 23 July. The BKhK says recently publicized documents (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 18 July 2001) implicate the three men in the organization of a death squad that allegedly killed opponents of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. The statement also urges the National Assembly to call an emergency session in order to launch a parliamentary probe into Lukashenka's possible implication in the disappearances of opposition figures Yury Zakharanka, Viktar Hanchar, Anatol Krasouski, and Dzmitry Zavadski. More that 50 Belarusian politicians and public figures have addressed Premier Uladzimir Yarmoshyn, urging him to set up a commission with the participation of international experts to probe the death squad allegations. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 24, 2001)

July 24, 2001

NATO GENERAL OPENS CHORNOBYL VICTIMS CENTER IN BELARUS

U.S. General Joseph Ralston, the commander in chief of NATO forces in Europe, inaugurated a U.S.-funded blood transfusion center in Homel, southeastern Belarus, on 23 July, Western and Belarusian agencies reported. The U.S. armed forces donated $400,000 for the center, which is to treat people affected by the Chornobyl nuclear disaster. "Let this hospital be a symbol of what we can achieve when we work together as partners towards a common cause and common good," Reuters quoted Ralston as saying in Homel. Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to Belarus Michael Kozak said in Homel that the U.S. is ready to normalize relations with Belarus if Minsk honors its commitments to the OSCE, Belapan reported. Kozak said that U.S. assistance to Belarus is directly dependent on the country's human rights record and compliance with international standards for free and fair elections.(RFE/RL Newsline, July 24, 2001)

July 26, 2001

LUKASHENKA, PUTIN, KUCHMA MEET AT SLAVIC FESTIVAL IN BELARUS

The presidents of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine — Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Vladimir Putin, and Leonid Kuchma, respectively — met for informal talks in Vitsebsk on 25 July. Lukashenka told journalists that they discussed international problems and issues of mutual interest, including the recent G7 plus Russia summit in Genoa and the U.S. proposals for a missile defense system. The three presidents also attended the gala concert of the Slavic Bazaar musical festival in Vitsebsk. The well-publicized visit of Putin and Kuchma to Belarus was seen by many Belarusian commentators as propagandistic support for Lukashenka ahead of the presidential elections in September. Lukashenka opened the Slavic Bazaar festival on 20 July. During the opening ceremony, his bodyguards beat into unconsciousness opposition Young Front activist Andrey Kanoprykau, who had unfurled a white-red-white banner and tried to throw opposition leaflets into the crowd, Belapan and RFE/RL's Belarusian Service reported. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 26, 2001)

July 27, 2001

BELARUSIANS RALLY TO DEMAND TRUTH ABOUT MISSING PEOPLE

Some 1,500 people formed "a living chain of those who are indifferent" in downtown Minsk on 26 July to demand answers from the government about the fate of opposition figures who have disappeared in Belarus, Belapan reported. The protesters included the wives of disappeared or imprisoned politicians as well as several participants in the presidential election campaign — Mikhail Chyhir, Syarhey Kalyakin, Syarhey Domash, Mikhail Marynich, and Syarhey Antonchyk. "This is a warning to those who give illegal orders and to those who carry them out. We must under-

stand that Belarus is turning into an enormous cemetery and that the organs of power are becoming undertakers," AP quoted Anatol Lyabedzka, the leader of the United Civic Party, as saying. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 27, 2001)

July 30, 2001

BELARUSIAN SECURITY FORCES BEAT, DETAIN YOUNG DEMONSTRATORS

Several protesters were injured and 20 arrested in Minsk on 27 July after security forces forcibly stopped a demonstration of several hundred people celebrating the anniversary of Belarus's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union, AP reported. The march was organized by the youth opposition movement Zubr (Bison), and was stopped by a large group of men in plain clothes as the demonstrators reached the Svisloch River. The protesters sat down and held pictures of opposition figures who have disappeared in the past two years while chanting "Where are these people?" and "Long Live Belarus." The group of men then began kicking and beating the protesters as the police arrived and made arrests. Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has abolished as a national holiday the day Belarus gained its independence from the USSR. Belapan reported the next day that 15 of the 20 people arrested will be tried for violating street demonstration regulations. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 30, 2001)

Aug. 1, 2001

BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT DEFENDS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AGAINST MURDER ACCUSATIONS

Alyaksandr Lukashenka denied on 31 July that members of his circle are involved in the disappearances and murders of several opposition figures and said that such charges are an attempt to ruin him, Belapan reported. Lukashenka said: "Today they throw stones at my men, those who stand beside me, meaning to hit me. I understand it perfectly well...Lukashenka is the one they want dead." In mid-July, the opposition published what appeared to be a confidential police report that suggested that three missing opposition figures -- who disappeared in 1999 without a trace -- were murdered by Dmytry Paulyuchenko, the commander of a special police force called SOBR, on the orders of Viktor Sheiman and Yury Sivakou, Lukashenka's security chief and interior minister, respectively, at the time. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 1, 2001)

Aug. 8, 2001

BELARUSIAN PRISON WARDEN SAID TO HAVE CONFIRMED GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN DISAPPEARANCES

The former warden of a death-row prison in Minsk has confirmed recent allegations of state involvement in the disappearances of opposition figures Yury Zakharanka, Viktar Hanchar, and Anatol Krasouski, according to opposition presidential candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk, Belapan reported on 7 August. Hancharyk referred to a 6 August telephone conversation he had with Colonel Aleh Alkayev, who was deputy chief of Belarus's Penal Committee and was mentioned in documents made public by Hancharyk in mid-July (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 16 July 2001). The documents identified Alkayev as the one who issued a pistol used for prisoner executions to Interior Ministry officer Dzmitry Pavlyuchenko on orders from Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau. Alkayev's current whereabouts are unknown, though his wife has said he has been staying with relatives in Russia for more than a month in the belief that his life is in danger. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 8, 2001)

Aug. 28, 2001

BELARUSIAN POLICE UNIT ACCUSED OF KILLING TWO OPPOSITION FIGURES...

A number of Belarusian and Russian media outlets on 27 August received a videotape on which two men accuse the Interior Ministry's special task force (SOBR) of killing opposition leader Viktar Hanchar and his friend Anatol Krasouski in September 1999. One of the men identified himself as Henadz Uhlyanitsa, a KGB officer from Minsk, while the other named himself as Andrey Zharnasek. The two men said Hanchar and Krasouski were kidnapped and subsequently killed by people from the SOBR unit, which is located near Byahoml (northern Belarus). The men added that Hanchar and Krasouski were buried along with their jeep near the site of the SOBR deployment. The alleged burial place was shown on the videotape. The videotaped allegations follow last week's statements by former prison warden Aleh Alkayeu that Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka sanctioned and covered up the murders of opposition figures (see "RFE/RL Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine Report," 28 August 2001).(RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 28, 2001)

Aug. 28, 2001

...WHILE KGB SAYS CHARGES ARE FABRICATED

.KGB spokesman Fyodar Kotau said on Belarusian Television the same day that the videotape featuring Uhlyanitsa and Zharnasek is a fabrication intended to compromise the Belarusian authorities. Kotau admitted that an officer named Uhlyanitsa works in the Belarusian KGB, but added that he is not able to affirm unambiguously that the man calling himself Uhlyanitsa on the videotape is the KGB officer bearing the same name. Belapan reported on 28 August that Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau and a group of sappers have gone to inspect the alleged burial place of Hanchar and Krasouski. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 28, 2001)

Aug. 28, 2001

LUKASHENKA, SHEYMAN, SIVAKOU LINKED TO DISAPPEARANCES OF OPPOSITION FIGURES

Former Agriculture Minister Vasil Lyavonau and former KGB Deputy Chairman Valery Kez briefed journalists in Minsk on 27 August on their conversations earlier this year with then-KGB Chairman Uladzimir Matskevich and then-Prosecutor-General Aleh Bazhelka, Belapan reported. According to Lyavonau and Kez, Matskevich and Bazhelka traced a death squad responsible for many murders in Belarus, arrested its commander Dzmitry Paulyuchenka, and requested that President Lukashenka sanction the arrest of then-Security Council Secretary Viktar Sheyman and then-Interior Minister Yury Sivakou as supervisors and instigators of the death squad. Lukashenka reportedly refused the request, fired Matskevich and Bazhelka, and hindered the investigation into the disappearances of Yury Zakharanka and Hanchar. "You have driven me into exhaustion. I cannot sleep at night, swallow handfuls of pills. But you dig and dig for evidence against me. Stop searching for Zakharanka and Hanchar. Do you want the opposition to carry caskets with their bodies in Minsk?" Lukashenka reportedly told Bazhelka. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 28, 2001)

Aug. 29, 2001

MINSK REFUTES VIDEOTAPE ON ALLEGED KILLING OF HANCHAR, KRASOUSKI.

Interior Minister Uladzimir Navumau on 28 August said the controversial videotape publicized the previous day alleging that opposition activist Viktar Hanchar and his friend Anatol Krasouski were killed by a special police unit and buried near Byahoml (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 28 August 2001, and End Note below) is a fabrication intended to smear the authorities in the run-up to the presidential elections, Belarusian media reported. Navumau and a group of sappers and journalists inspected the alleged burial site and declared that there are no sign of bodies. Scientist Radzim Haretski has recognized the KGB officer making the allegation on the tape as Henadz Uhlyanitsa, his son in law. Uhlyanitsa's identity was also confirmed by his wife. According to Haretski, Uhlyanitsa disappeared after leaving for work on 26 August. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 29, 2001)

Sept. 10, 2001

ELECTION COMMISSION SAYS LUKASHENKA WON LANDSLIDE VICTORY...

Central Election Commission head Lidziya Yarmoshyna on 10 September said Alyaksandr Lukashenka was overwhelmingly re-elected for a second term in the 9 September presidential ballot, Belapan reported. According to preliminary results that do not include data from polling

stations abroad, Lukashenka won 75.62 percent of the vote. Unified opposition candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk obtained 15.39 percent of the vote and Liberal Democratic Party leader Syarhey Haydukevich 2.48 percent. Some 6.15 million Belarusians took part in the ballot (83.85 percent of eligible voters). Yarmoshyna said the ballot was conducted "irreproachably." "This was a brilliant, elegant, persuasive victory," Lukashenka commented just one hour after the closure of polling stations, when no official election results had yet been released. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 10, 2001)

Sept. 13, 2001

LUKASHENKA RESHUFFLES TOP ADMINISTRATION.

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 12 September replaced presidential administration chief Mikhail Myasnikovich with Security Council Secretary Ural Latypau, Belapan reported. Lukashenka named Myasnikovich his aide "for special assignments," and appointed presidential security chief Henadz Nyavyhlas to Latypau's former post. Lukashenka also sacked two presidential administration deputy chiefs, Uladzimir Zamyatalin and Yury Sivakou, replacing them with Security Council Deputy Secretary Stanislau Knyazeu and Deputy Prime Minister Leanid Kozik. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 13, 2001)

Sept. 25, 2001

BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT PLEDGES TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTORS

Lukashenka announced that the new government will work toward attracting foreign investors to Belarus. "Keen interest in our enterprises is being manifested not only by Russian capital but also by major international companies and corporations as well as Western states. I feel that, following the [presidential] election, strong competition has begun for the right to invest money in our economy," Lukashenka noted. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 25, 2001)

Oct. 1, 2001

MINSK WORKERS BLOCK STREET TO GET OVERDUE WAGES

Some 500 angry workers of the Minsk Tractor Plant, a flagship of Belarusian industry, blocked the street near their factory for two hours on 28 September, to protest the delay in paying wage arrears, Belapan reported. The plant's management promised to pay workers their overdue wages in mid-September, but has failed to do so. According to the agency, the street protest greatly alarmed both plant managers and government officials who immediately arranged for payments to begin. "The protest has shown that the working class has not yet degraded completely. In the current conditions, this is the only effective method for workers to defend their rights," said trade union leader Alyaksandr Bukhvostau. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 1, 2001)

Oct. 1, 2001

LUKASHENKA APPOINTS NEW PRIME MINISTER

The Belarusian president has appointed 52-year-old Henadz Navitski as new prime minister, Belapan reported on 1 October. Navitski was a deputy prime minister in the previous cabinet of Uladzimir Yarmoshyn. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 1, 2001)

Oct. 2, 2001

BELARUS'S SUPREME COURT REJECTS COMPLAINT BY LUKASHENKA'S RIVAL

.The Supreme Court has refused to open a criminal case in connection with a 92-page complaint by Hancharyk about numerous violations of Belarus's electoral legislation during the recent presidential election campaign, RFE/RL's Belarusian Service reported on 1 October. Judge Larysa Filimanikhina officially responded to Hancharyk by saying that viewing his complaint is beyond the competence of the Supreme Court. Previously Filimanikhina told Hancharyk that he has the right to question the decision of the Central Election Commission (CEC) on the presidential election in court, but now says this right applies only to the situation if the CEC declares a ballot to be invalid. "I can appeal the CEC's decision if it declares an election invalid. But I cannot if it declares it valid. This is a lunatic asylum, what other comment can I make?" Hancharyk told RFE/RL. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 2, 2001)

Oct. 2, 2001

YOUTH GROUP PROTESTS SALE OF MINSK PLANT TO RUSSIAN SYNDICATE

Some 30 activists of the Youth Front on 2 October staged a picket outside the Minsk Automobile Factory (MAZ), protesting the alleged sale of the plant to Russia's Siberian Aluminum industrial group, Belapan reported. According to unconfirmed reports in Belarusian independent media, Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska discussed the purchase of a controlling stake in MAZ with the Belarusian government last month. RFE/RL's Belarusian Service quoted MAZ Deputy Director Eduard Padalyak as saying that a Belarusian-Russian commission is currently preparing a plan for the sale of MAZ. "Lukashenka must somehow pay for his 'elegant' election victory.... [Today's protest] is a sign of our national resistance. If Russian capital buys our enterprises, we can forget about Belarus's economic independence," Youth Front activist Alyaksey Shein said. Plainclothes policemen arrested a dozen picketers, including Youth Front leader Pavel Sevyarynets. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 3, 2001)

Oct. 3, 2001

UPPER HOUSE SPEAKER WANTS ALL BILLS TRANSLATED INTO BELARUSIAN

Alyaksandr Vaytovich, the chairman of the 64-seat Council of the Republic, in his speech to the upper chamber on 2 October proposed that the Belarusian legislature have all bills written in the two state languages -- Belarusian and Russian. "Belarusian and Russian have the status of state languages in the Republic of Belarus, but in practice, almost all acts are in Russian only," Belapan quoted Vaytovich as saying. "In other bilingual countries, bills are passed in two state languages. It is time for us to introduce this practice," he added. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 3, 2001)

Oct. 5, 2001

LUKASHENKA WANTS BETTER RELATIONS WITH EUROPE.

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 4 October instructed Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastou to work with EU countries and European organizations toward restoring the previous level of relations, Belapan reported, quoting the presidential press service. According to Lukashenka, "international monitoring of the [presidential] election clearly showed that the EU does not intend to politically isolate Belarus." Khvastou was ordered to begin talks with EU ambassadors accredited in Minsk to improve mutual political and economic relations. RFE/RL's Belarusian Service reported on 4 October that the previous day Khvastou called his Lithuanian counterpart Antanas Valionis, asking Vilnius to assist Minsk in "difficult dialogue" with the West. Lithuania will preside over the Council of Europe in November. (RFE/RL Newsline, Oct. 5, 2001)

CULTURE and SOCIETY

Third Congress of the World Association of Belarusians "Backauscyna"

Over 200 representatives of Belarusian diaspora convened in Miensk on July 5-6, 2001.

The congress was attended by delegates from 18 countries: U.S.A, Canada, Belgium, Australia, United Kingdom, Poland, Baltic republics, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, who represented 72 diaspora organizations.

Among guests were the U.S. ambassador Michael Kozak, representatives of Ukraine, Armenia and of international organizations — OSCE and the United Nations.

Following governmental structures were also represented: ministries of education, culture and justice, and the State Committee on religion and nationalities.

The congress adopted following documents:

* "The Belarusian Community Abroad in the 21st Century" (program of consolidation and support of Belarusian diaspora in the years 2001 - 2005). According to this program, Belarusian diaspora expects the state of Belarus to undertake these concrete steps: creation of a state committee on diaspora, adoption of the law "On Belarusian Diaspora", defense of rights of Belarusian minorities in other countries by concluding corresponding international agreements.

* resolution, expressing support of the Act of Independence, adopted by the All-Belarusian Congress on July 29, 2000

* resolution on activity and support of World Association of Belarusians "Backauscyna"

* declaration on Belarusian language.

Despite the efforts of Belarus' embassies in the countries of the former Soviet Union and of the State Committee on Religion and Nationalities, who tried to dissuade diaspora from attending, 2/3 of the nominated delegates took part in its proceedings,

Professor **Anatol Hryckievic** was elected the president of "Backauscyna", and Mrs. **Alena Makouskaja** — the chairperson of the Association's Council.

• STUDENTS PROTEST CLOSURE OF BELARUSIAN-LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Students on 17 September picketed the City Hall in Svetlahorsk, southeastern Belarus, protesting the announced closure of the local branch of the Minsk-based National State Humanities Lycee, Svetlahorsk's only Belarusian-language school, Belapan reported. Last week the city authorities ordered the school closed and its students transferred to another school. Those opposing the closure say the authorities have long resented the school's unconventional teaching methods and its use of the Belarusian language instead of Russian. "Our classes continue as usual despite the fact that the lycee is no longer getting any funding," school Director Telman Maslyukou told the agency. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 18, 2001)

• YOUTH GROUPS PROTEST MINSK'S BELTWAY EXPANSION TO STALIN-ERA MASSACRE SITE

Dozens of activists from the Youth Front and the European Way organizations are continuing protests outside Minsk against the expansion of the Minsk beltway to Kurapaty, the site where tens of thousands were executed and buried by the NKVD in the 1930s, Belapan reported on 25 September. Youth Front activists put up eight wooden crosses in an attempt to stop construction workers from moving closer to the massacre site. The Youth Front told the agency that police officers and regional-level officials often visit the site, saying they have "an order" to proceed with the construction project. "Those who executed people by shooting 60 years ago also carried out orders," Youth Front said in a statement. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 26, 2001)

• BELARUSIAN INTELLECTUALS PROTEST ROAD CONSTRUCTION AT STALIN-ERA MASSACRE SITE.

Some 40 Belarusian intellectuals and prominent public figures have demanded that the Minsk City authorities stop the road construction work at Kurapaty, a site outside Minsk where tens of thousands were executed and buried by the NKVD in the 1930s (see "RFE/RL Newsline, 26 September 2001), Belapan reported on 29 September. They said in a statement that a government commission in 1989 confirmed that Kurapaty is a burial ground of thousands of victims of the NKVD, and is now listed as a Belarusian historical and cultural heritage site. The authors of the statement consider the ongoing expansion of the Minsk beltway to be a direct threat to Kurapaty. They want the authorities to suspend the construction work, carry out additional archeological excavations at the site, publish the full results of the previous investigation, and turn the area into a memorial. (RFE/RL Newsline, October 1, 2001)

HUMAN RIGHTS

BELARUSIAN POLICE RAID OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER — Police officers on 12 July raided the office of the independent newspaper *"Volny horad"* in Krychau, Mahileu Oblast, RFE/RL's Belarusian Service reported. They arrested three journalists, confiscated computers and publications they found, and sealed the office. Dzmitry Syarheyeu, a correspondent with "Volny horad," told RFE/RL's Belarusian Service that the police raid was most likely politically motivated. The *"Volny horad"* editorial office is in the same building as the headquarters of the local campaign staff of Syamyon Domash, a challenger to President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in the 9 September presidential elections. According to Syarheyeu, the local authorities are "afraid" of the activities of Domash's campaigners in Krychau. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 13, 2001)

BELARUSIAN LAW ENFORCERS CLAMP DOWN ON NGOS IN HRODNA, HOMEL — Police officers on 10 August conducted a search without a warrant of the office of the Hrodna-based organization *Ratusha* headed by presidential hopeful Syamyon Domash, seizing all computers and other office equipment, Belapan reported. The same day, KGB officers searched an apartment in Homel that houses a youth organization named Hart and seized all of the organization's documents and computers. Two days earlier, police officers searched the office of the Homel-based organization Grazhdanskaya Initsiativa headed by Domash's presidential campaign manager in the Homel region. (RFE/RL Newsline, August 13, 2001)

BELARUSIAN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER WARNED — The State Press Committee has issued a warning to the independent, pro-opposition newspaper *"Nasha svaboda,"* Belapan reported on 20 August. The committee said information published in *"Nasha svaboda"* on 17 August that President Lukashenka accused Premier Uladzimir Yarmoshyn and presidential administration chief Mikhail Myasnikovich of plotting against him is "incorrect." The committee added that *"Nasha svaboda"* will be banned for a period of three months if future actions require another warning. Finance police seized 400,000 copies of the 17 August issue of *"Nasha svaboda"* (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 20 August 2001). The editors have reportedly managed to distribute some 100,000 copies of the issue. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 21, 2001)

BELARUSIAN AUTHORITIES CLAMP DOWN ON INDEPENDENT PRINTING HOUSE, NEWSPAPER — Finance police on 22 August raided the independent printing house Magic and sealed the machine that prints the country's major independent newspapers, including *"Narodnaya volya," "Rabochy"* and *"Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta,"* Belapan reported. According to Magic Director Yury Budzko, the formal pretext for the sealing of the printing press was an "old legal case that Magic won in court two months ago." Budzko said finance inspectors have reopened that case. The previous day, finance police confiscated half a dozen computers from the Minsk-based pro-opposition newspaper *"Narodnaya volya"*. Iosif Syaredzich, the newspaper's editor in chief, told the agency that the remaining computers will suffice to keep *"Narodnaya volya"* afloat. "The paper will continue to appear as long as I am alive. Even if we lose all of our equipment, we will print the paper in Vilnius, Moscow, Warsaw, Paris, anywhere, and deliver it to Minsk," Syaredzich pledged.(RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 23, 2001)

BELARUSIAN AUTHORITIES CONFISCATE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER ISSUE — Authorities have confiscated 40,000 copies of a special issue of the independent newspaper "Rabochy" and are preventing the printing house from printing further copies, Belapan reported on 28 August. Prosecutors accused the newspaper of slander in connection with an article regarding alleged financial and economic offenses of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka and his administration that was to appear in the newspaper's special issue. "The authorities are acting not only from fear that people will know the truth but because they are losing certainty that Lukashenka can honestly win the elections," "Rabochy" Editor in Chief Viktar Ivashkevich told AP. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 29, 2001)

BELARUSIAN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER ISSUE CONFISCATED AGAIN — Prosecutors in Hrodna, western Belarus, on 12 September seized a print run of 8,132 copies of the local independent newspaper "Pahonya," Belapan reported. "Pahonya" Editor in Chief Mikalay Markevich told the agency that this latest seizure may be linked to the confiscation of a "Pahonya" issue earlier this month, when regional investigators launched a probe into the publication of an article deemed defamatory to President Lukashenka. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 14, 2001)

BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION PICKETS LUKASHENKA'S OFFICE OVER DISAPPEARANCES — Some 200 people formed a "chain of concerned people" in front of the Belarusian president's headquarters on 17 September, protesting the unaccounted for disappearances of the regime's political opponents. The protesters, who included relatives of the missing politicians, displayed photos of opposition politicians Viktar Hanchar and Yury Zakharanka, businessman Anatol Krasouski, and journalist Dzmitry Zavadski. Anatol Lyabedzka, the leader of the United Civic Party, told Belapan that his party considers the protest campaign over the disappearances one of its top priorities and is planning to stage more protests in Minsk and other Belarusian cities. Lyabedzka added that the opposition intends to ask the European Court of Human Rights to look into the disappearances. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 18, 2001)

BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHT ACTIVIST SAYS ELECTION OBSERVERS ARE VICTIMIZED — Human Rights Center "Viasna" head Ales Byalyatski, who coordinated domestic election observers in Belarus's presidential election, told journalists on 21 September that many observers have been victimized and prosecuted, Belapan reported. According to Byalyatski, Ales Halich from Minsk and Pyotr Mihurski from Mahileu Oblast are to be brought to trial. Halich is accused of petty hooliganism for calling an election official a "villain" after the latter reportedly crumpled Halich's ID and threw it on the floor. Mihurski faces a criminal charge for allegedly exceeding his authority. Teacher Andrey Alyakhnovich and school instructor Alyaksandr Nikitsin from Minsk Oblast were fired from their jobs. Byalyatski added that Aleh Myatselitsa

BELARUS & the WORLD

U.S. DEPARTMENT FINDS ALLEGATIONS OF DEATH SQUAD IN BELARUS 'CREDIBLE'... — U.S. State Department spokesmen Charles Hunter and Philip Reeker have evaluated as "credible" the revelations by two former Belarusian investigators, Dzmitry Petrushkevich and Aleh Sluchak, about the existence of a government-organized death squad in Belarus that is responsible for the murders of prominent opposition figures. "The two investigators have made detailed and credible revelations about a Lukashenka regime death squad that's reportedly responsible for up to 30 murders," Hunter said on 17 July. "The United States takes these allegations very seriously and calls on the Belarusian authorities to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation," Reeker said the next day. Petrushkevich and Sluchak are currently in the U.S., where they have reportedly been granted political asylum. Belarusian trade union leader Uladzimir Hancharyk recently publicized documents supporting their death squad allegations (RFE/RL Newsline, July 19, 2001)

WHILE LUKASHENKA TELLS WASHINGTON TO MIND ITS OWN BUSINESS. — "As regards the U.S. State Department's [comments on Petrushkevich's and Sluchak's claims], I would advise [them] to mind their own business. I think they should not meddle in problems they don't understand," Belarusian Television quoted President Alyaksandr Lukashenka as saying on 18 July. Lukashenka pledged "to react in an appropriate way in the near future" to the death squad allegations, which he said he sees as the opposition's efforts to discredit him in the presidential election campaign. He noted that the recent trip of the wives of disappeared Belarusian opposition figures to the U.S. and the letter they sent to his own wife and mother over the disappearances is only a "fuss." He added: "It is a predetermined losing affair for me to step into this chaos, into this fuss." Belarusian Television broadcast Lukashenka's comments without explaining the nature of the allegations by Petrushkevich and Sluchak. (RFE/RL Newsline, July 19, 2001)

CHINESE LEADER RALLIES TO LUKASHENKA'S SIDE — Chinese president Jiang Zemin rallied to the side of president Lukashenka during his visit to Minsk on 18-19 July, Reuters reported. "We respect the path that the Belarusian people have chosen. China adheres to the principle that all countries have the right to choose their own way forward," Jiang said. Lukashenka hailed Jiang's visit and his support. "It is particularly important thet athe Chinese people have promised us their support at any time and under any circu,stances. China will stand by the Belarusian people," the agency quoted Lukashenka as saying.(RFE/RL Newsline, July 19, 2001)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE UNHAPPY WITH BELARUS — A delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) visiting Belarus ahead of next month's presidential election said on 3 August that it is "deeply disappointed" in the government's lack of progress in finding those responsible for the disappearance of prominent Belarusians over the last two years, Reuters reported. Terry Davis, the leader of the delegation, said that the group "also expressed great concern about the harassment of the opposition." The PACE delegation also urged Belarusian officials to allow entry to an election monitoring group from the OSCE, which was denied visas for Belarus earlier in the week. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 3, 2001)

BELARUSIAN, RUSSIAN PRESIDENTS MEET IN SOCHI — Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Belarusian counterpart Alyaksandr Lukashenka met in Sochi on 2 August on the sidelines of the CIS summit being held in the Russian resort town, ITAR-TASS reported. Putin said the meeting proceeded "energetically and sharply." He added that Lukashenka "is defending the interests of his country's economy, while we are striving to protect ours." Lukashenka said that trade turnover between the two countries has increased to the point that Belarus is now Russia's second-largest trading partner after Germany. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 3, 2001)

U.S. CONDEMNS BELARUSIAN OFFICIALS' SEIZURE OF EQUIPMENT — The U.S. State Department said on 3 August that Belarusian authorities have seized American com-

puter equipment being used by a nongovernmental organization and an independent newspaper, Reuters reported. U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said in a statement that the equipment was taken by security forces from the newspaper "*Volny Horad*" in the town of Krichev and from a resource center under the terms of presidential decree No. 8, "imposed by the regime to limit foreign assistance to the democratic opposition." Boucher said Belarusian officials "have a duty either to return the equipment to its intended recipients, or to the U.S. — and failing that, they are obligated to refund its value in dollars." He said the assistance was granted through a 1996 bilateral agreement. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 6, 2001)

RUSSIA'S ZYUGANOV BACKS LUKASHENKA — Gennadii Zyuganov, the leader of Russia's Communist Party, met with Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in Minsk on 20 August, Belarusian Television reported. Zyuganov complimented Lukashenka for initiating the creation of the Russia-Belarus Union and assured the Belarusian president that Russia's Communists will continue to back him. Meanwhile, the Belarusian Party of Communists led by Syarhey Kalyakin has thrown its support behind Uladzimir Hancharyk, Lukashenka's challenger in the 9 September presidential ballot. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 21, 2001)

BELARUS OBTAINS $30 MILLION LOAN FROM RUSSIA — The Finance Ministry has reported that Minsk received $30 million last week as the first tranche of the $100 million loan previously approved by Russia, Belapan reported on 20 August. The ministry added that the loan will be used to pay for Russian imports, primarily oil and gas. (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 21, 2001

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE ADDRESSES MINSK ON INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY... — In a special message devoted to the 10th anniversary of Belarus's independence (25 August), Colin Powell declared that the U.S. is prepared to resume productive bilateral relations with Belarus if the Belarusian authorities allow free, fair, and democratic elections; respect civil society and human rights; and restore the rule of law, Belapan reported on 28 August. "Regrettably, since 1996 the Belarusian regime has chosen to abandon the transition to democracy and the rule of law.... The regime's policies have prevented the United States and other OSCE participating states from being able to develop bilateral relations fruitfully and normally," Powell added. He appealed to Minsk to adhere to its international commitments and to bring its electoral process into conformity with OSCE standards. Powell said a failure to take these steps "in a timely, consequential, and serious way" will "condemn the current regime to remain the lone outlaw in Europe." (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 29, 2001)

...BUT IS MET WITH REBUFF — Speaking on Belarusian Television on 28 August, Foreign Minister Mikhail Khvastou said Powell's message constitutes a "crude interference in Belarus' domestic affairs." Khvastou added that Belarus meets OSCE conditions for holding democratic elections. "But now the American side is trying to put forward to us its special conditions. We will not fulfill them," Khvastou said. Khvastou accused Washington of rendering political support to "people who are not able to come to power on their own." (RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 29, 2001)

LUKASHENKA SLAMS POWELL FOR 'INSOLENT' MESSAGE, U.S. FOR IMMATURITY — Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 29 August denounced the statement U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made on the occasion of Belarus's 10th anniversary of independence (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 29 August 2001) as "insolent [and] unprecedented." Powell criticized the Belarusian regime for abandoning "the transition to democracy and the rule of law" in 1996. "Such a statement is totally inadmissible. Let God forgive him [Powell]. It just came to my mind this morning: Their civilization is 300 years old, while ours [Belarus' and Russia's] is over 2,000 years of age. They haven't yet grown up to our civilization. Do you see? They can't behave themselves in a proper way," Belarusian Television quoted Lukashenka as saying in an interview with a Russian journalist.(RFE/RL Newsline, Aug. 30, 2001)

OSCE REJECTS MINSK'S ESPIONAGE ACCUSATIONS — *"Sovetskaya Belorussiya,"* a press organ of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's administration, published on 5 September a lengthy "analytical memorandum" accusing U.S., British, and German intelligence agencies of contriving an operation code-named "White Stork" with the aim of overthrowing Lukashenka. The newspaper alleges that Western spymasters are using the OSCE's Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk, Western humanitarian agencies, and Belarusian NGOs as a cover for their operation. The publication claimed the operation is to culminate in a 10 September night march of young opposition activists from Belarusian regions on Minsk and a possible attack on Lukashenka's residence. "The article appears to be an attempt to discredit the advisory and monitoring activities which the OSCE has undertaken. On earlier occasions, official publications have attempted to associate [the OSCE] with intelligence operations. Such accusations are groundless," Minsk's OSCE mission said in a statement. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 6, 2001)

OSCE CONDEMNS BELARUS' BALLOT AS UNFAIR — "Unfortunately, Belarus's presidential elections did not meet international standards for free, democratic elections," AP quoted Kimmo Kiljunen, vice president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and coordinator of the OSCE's monitoring mission in Belarus, as saying on 10 September. "Maybe the election process was somewhat free but clearly it was not fair," Kiljunen added. The OSCE issued a statement condemning the election campaign. "There were fundamental flaws in the electoral process, some of which are specific to the political situation in Belarus," the statement said. The OSCE added that the Belarusian authorities did everything possible to block the opposition, including ruling by decree, failing to ensure the independence of the election administration, failing to properly control early voting, and creating a campaign environment that was seriously detrimental to the opposition. The statement noted that the authorities launched a campaign of intimidation against opposition activists, domestic observers, and independent media, and a smear campaign against international observers. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 10, 2001)

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SLAMS LUKASHENKA'S ELECTION VICTORY AS 'MEANINGLESS' — U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Reeker on 10 September said no part of Belarus's presidential election process was transparent or fair. "[Alyaksandr] Lukashenka has merely used a facade of elections to engineer a meaningless victory for himself," Reeker noted. "The United States concurs with the OSCE's findings that the electoral process was not democratic. Elections that are neither free nor fair, cannot be internationally recognized," Reeker stressed. And he added: "Belarusian authorities have demonstrated a clear disregard for both democracy and human rights during this election by avoiding transparency in all stages and engaging in a campaign of intimidation." Reeker also said the U.S. will consult with other nations in the OSCE on what steps to take to restore democracy in Belarus.(RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 11, 2001)

EU CANNOT NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH BELARUS — EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana on 11 September said the EU cannot conduct normal relations with Belarus following the 9 September presidential election. "We're not going to normalize relations with a country which does not respect the freedom of an election," Solana told Reuters during a EU-Ukraine summit at Yalta. EU Commission spokesman Gunnar Wiegand said the same day that "one thing is perfectly clear, the elections were not held in a normal way," and added that current relations between the EU and Belarus are "practically nonexistent" because of the political climate in Minsk. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 12, 2001)

OSCE CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE WITH BELARUS — In a statement released on 11 September, OSCE Chairman Mircea Geoana deplored that Belarus's presidential election failed to meet OSCE standards and called for consultations between Belarusian authorities and the international community, Belapan reported. Geoana said the international isolation of Belarus runs counter to the interests of the Belarusian people. He suggested opening a new chapter of cooperation between Belarusian authorities, the democratic structures of civil society, and the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group headed by Hans Georg Wieck. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 12, 2001)

LUKASHENKA SENDS CONDOLENCES TO BUSH OVER TERRORIST ATTACKS — Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has sent condolences to U.S. President George W. Bush over the 11 September terrorist attacks on the U.S. "On behalf of the Belarusian people, I extend heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims, and express solidarity with the United States and the world community in combating international terrorism and crime," Belapan quoted from Lukashenka's message.(RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 12, 2001)

HAVEL SAYS CZECHS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO LUKASHENKA ABUSES — President Havel, after a meeting with Belarusian writer Vasil Bykau, expressed his hope that "the situation in Belarus will change," CTK reported on 12 September. A longtime champion of human rights, Havel said President Alyaksandr Lukashenka heads "a highly authoritative regime which suppresses human rights, concentrates all instruments of power in the hands of one person, controls the media, and does not abhor applying very hard methods of struggle against the opposition." The president added that Czechs, in particular, should be sensitive to human rights abuses given their experience under communism. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 13, 2001)

LUKASHENKA REPORTEDLY CANCELS CONDOLENCE VISIT TO U.S. EMBASSY — President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 13 September canceled a visit to the U.S. Embassy in Minsk in which he was to offer his condolences in connection with the terrorist attacks on the U.S., Belapan reported on 13 September. Quoting an anonymous source from the embassy, the agency said Lukashenka's protocol officials informed the embassy at short notice that the Belarusian president would be accompanied by a television crew and photographers during his visit. The embassy reportedly responded that no filming is allowed on the embassy's premises, and Lukashenka's motorcade turned around not far from the embassy and withdrew. Lukashenka subsequently sent Foreign Minister Khvastou to offer condolences. (RFE/RL Newsline, Sept. 14, 2001)

EU SAYS BELARUS' INTERNATIONAL TIES HINGE ON DEMOCRATIC CHANGES — The EU on 14 September backed the OSCE's assessment of Belarus's presidential elections, saying in a statement that they were neither free nor fair. "The European Union deplores, in particular, the harassment of representatives of the opposition, national observers, independent media, and nongovernmental organizations," the statement read. The EU noted that the overcoming of Belarus's isolation in the international arena "is essentially dependent on respect for human rights and the progress of democracy in that country." (RFE/RL Newsline, September 17, 2001)

LIBYAN DEFENSE CHIEF IN MINSK — Libyan Defense Secretary Abu Bakr Younis Jaber visited Belarus on 14-15 September, meeting with President Lukashenka and Prime Minister Uladzimir Yarmoshyn. Belapan quoted Lukashenka as saying that Belarusian-Libyan relations need to be given "serious dynamics." The visitor delivered congratulations from Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi on Lukashenka's reelection. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 17, 2001)

WHITE HOUSE SAYS LUKASHENKA STOLE ELECTION FROM PEOPLE — Washington on 17 September condemned in strong language Belarus's presidential election on 9 September, saying it was "severely flawed," international news agencies reported. "Not only did Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Europe's last dictator, steal the elections from the Belarusian people -- for the moment, he also stole their opportunity to return to a path towards democracy and free-market economy," White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said in a written statement. "This was a sadly missed opportunity and a sad moment for a brave people who suffer under a climate of fear," the statement added. The White House said the United States will work with its European allies through foreign aid programs and international organizations to promote "democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" in Belarus. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 18, 2001)

BELARUS, LIBYA SIGN COOPERATION DEALS — A visit by Libyan Defense Secretary Abu Bakr Younis Jaber to Belarus from 14-17 September resulted in the signing of several bilateral cooperation accords on 17 September, Belapan reported. The sides signed memorandums on joint investment in banking, finance, industrial sector, the petrochemical industry, as well as agreements between the cities of Minsk and Tripoli and between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Libya's General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 18, 2001)

BELARUS' RIVAL LEGISLATURES INVITED TO STRASBOURG — The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has invited two delegations -- one from the official National Assembly and the other from the opposition Supreme Soviet --to attend a PACE session in Strasbourg from 24-30 September, Belapan reported on 18 September. (RFE/RL Newsline, September 19, 2001)

LUKASHENKA'S RIVAL APPEALS TO FOREIGN TRADE UNIONS OVER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION — Presidential candidate Uladzimir Hancharyk, leader of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, has appealed to international trade unions for help in spreading what he claims is the truth about the recent presidential election in Belarus, Belapan reported on 20 September. Hancharyk said the officially declared election results were falsified. He added that observers registered thousands of violations of the electoral law that "left voters cheated and offended, and the country without legally elected organs of power." (RFE/RL Newsline, September 21, 2001)

Spotlight on Belarus Blotted-Out

In the weeks leading up to the Belarusian presidential election of September 9 the world saw, in large part thanks to excellent but overdue media attention, the looming dark, evil cloud over Belarus and Europe. The effort to extend Lukashenka's occupation of Belarus, and thus continue the campaign to liquidate Belarusian nationhood, heritage and culture and to destabilize Europe, capitalized on the weakness and the vulnerability of the existing land and society. Then from New York came the vivid images, witnessed live by at least 60 million people, of an act of unprecedented cruelty — the destruction of the World Trade Center. The catastrophic events of that day immediately and have ever since overshadowed the events in Belarus. But like the actions and events in Belarus these were acts which were designed to exploit inherent weakness, vulnerability and trust.

Minoru Yamasaki, designer of the World Trade Center, was reported to have once said that he considered those buildings as a 'monument to peace'. Indeed, in their vulnerability was an expression of hope for the future and of a trust that forces of peace will prevail.

The reestablishment of Belarusian nationhood can also be seen as the raising of a monument to peace and an expression of faith in the future and trust in the goodness in mankind. Wasn't Belarus's right to existence proclaimed by numerous conventions, statements, treaties and other agreements?

In both cases survival of the 'edifices' was rooted in a presumed universal respect for the rule of law and faith in civility — not to mention the God-given right of the Belarusian people to their language, culture and traditions and the rights of all people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The World Trade Center, and its occupants, was physically unshielded and vulnerable to the attack; and Belarus and its people are in many ways unshielded thus making it an easy target of physical and political assault.

Now, rubble covers and spills beyond the 80,000 square foot base of the twin towers, and the rubble of wrecked dreams and hopes covers a country of 80,000 square miles — with consequences for its neighbors.

Undoubtedly, just as New York and the United States will see justice done and a stronger more powerful city and nation emerge, Belarus and Belarusians won't disappear from the Earth. It is also guaranteed that the perpetrators of these dastardly acts, the terrorist conspirators and their supporters, and Lukashenka and his supporters, have secured eternal infamy for themselves. And now the question is: What is to be done with the offenders that are on the loose?

John Galinovich
Scranton, Pennsylvania
U.S.A.

• • •

Prayer

Humbled and profoundly touched by the National Day of Prayer in the nation's capital and the overwhelming support America has received in the aftermath of the recent tragic events in America, I recalled the truly prophetic, universally applicable poem by Ryhor Krushyna published more than a quarter of a century ago and simply entitled a "Prayer":

PRAYER, by Ryhor Krushyna, 1907-1979

Precious, Holy and Almighty God,
Your Glory manifests itself in Heaven.
Protect my Country, my suffering land.

Protect the entire world and its peoples
And protect me for I'm but human.
Save us in this century from sickness and harm.

In this horrible nuclear century,
Where threats of danger ever grow.
Man has thrust Man into an abyss of godlessness.

Now there is no rest for us,
People die in an infernal fire.
Protect, dear God, Goodness and all Living Beings.

From *Dreams and Reveries*. New York: 1975.
Translated from the Belarusan.
Translation: Ihar Kazak, 14 September 2001

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St. Peterburg, Florida, U.S.A.

Annual subscription rate for 2001: $45 for individuals, $65 for institutions
Make your check or money order in U.S. funds payable to:
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Annual subscription rates in Europe are:
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